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PREFACE.

The author of this little book is one of those who hold that Indians should co-operate in the work of the Simon Commission only on a basis of perfect equality. Until this status of equality is accorded, which may be done by constituting a committee of the Indian Central Legislature into a parallel Commission with equal authority, Indians should maintain the boycott, to the reality of which Sir John Simon and his colleagues cannot shut their eyes.

Whatever the final decision of His Majesty's Government, it will be beneficial to discuss and clarify some of the important issues, like those of the fitness of democratic institutions to the East and the place of India in the Empire, which have been raised. Some of the chapters were originally written as newspaper articles.

BOMBAY

April, 18th 1928



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THE ANNOUNCEMENT.

On November 8, 1927, the Prime Minister, Mr Stanley Baldwin, announced in the House of Commons the names of the seven gentlemen who would constitute the Royal Commission on Indian Reforms. As anticipated in India and England, Sir John Simon was the Chairman. His colleagues were Viscount Burnham, Lord Statheona, the Hon'ble Edward Cadogan, the Rt Hon'ble Stephen Walsh, Colonel the Rt Hon'ble George Lane Fox and Major C R Attlee.

Born in 1873, Sir John Simon is now almost exactly fifty years of age. As ages go in India, Sir John is an old man but he is young in comparison with other prominent figures in British public life. He was called to the bar in 1899 and very early established the reputation on being one of the cleverest lawyers in England. He "took silk" in 1908. Two years later he served on the Royal Commission on Justices of the Peace. Later on he served on an even more important Royal Commission, namely, that which considered the reorganisation of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Sir John Simon was

Solicitor-General from 1910 to 1913 in the Liberal Cabinet and Attorney General with a seat in the Cabinet from 1913 to 1915

The most notable achievement to the credit of Sir John Simon recently was his stand against the General Strike in England in 1926. His able exposition of the law relating to strikes convinced the public of the illegality of the General Strike. The brilliance of his past career and the political principles which he holds, entitles India to look for at least a fair hearing at his hands. Indians would not have felt the same confidence were the Chairman of the Commission a Conservative. The Liberal party in England has a magnificent record to its credit so far as India is concerned and it is only fair to entertain the hope that Sir John will not betray the past traditions of his party.

Viscount Burnham, though a member of the House of Commons for a number of years and a member of the House of Lords since his elevation to the Peerage in 1903, is not a very important figure in British public life. He is better known as a newspaper owner than for any notable political achievement.

Lord Strathearn, the Hon'ble E. G. C. Cadogan, and Col the Rt Hon George Lane

Fox belong to some of the most aristocratic families in England, and have occupied important political and civic offices. There is nothing much more to be said about them than that they are average specimens of the British member of Parliament with less, rather than more, than the usual information about India its peoples and its problems.

The Rt Hon Stephen Walsh, Secretary of State for War in Mr Ramsay Macdonald's Cabinet in 1924, belongs to a different type. Essentially a self-made man, he rose from the ranks to be Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of National Services in 1917, to the Local Government Board from 1917 to 1919, and Vice-Chairman of the Labour Party in the House of Commons in 1921-22. Unlike his leader in the House, Mr Ramsay Macdonald, or his colleague, Colonel Wedgwood, Mr. Walsh has not been noted in the past for his interest in India problems. With Mr Walsh is associated one of the newer type of Labour Members of Parliament, Major C R Attlee, who worked with him as Under Secretary for War in 1924.

Except for Sir John Simon, who has, for a number of years occupied a place in the front rank of the British Liberal Party and whose capacity for statesmanship has been recogni-

sed by all parties alike, the Commission can by no means be said to be the best choice which England could have made for a task of the importance of that which confronts it in India. The Commissioners were described, truly enough, as "men in the second flight," of British politicians. The exclusion of Indians from the Commission was anticipated some time before the actual announcement was made. Sri Tej Bahadur Sapru, who had returned from England shortly before the announcement regarding the Commission, declared that he was not at all surprised at the action of His Majesty's Government. When the names of the Commissioners was made public he said in the course of an interview --

it The exclusion of Indians from the personnel of the Commission can only be described as arbitrary, unjust and unfair to India

Neither Mr. Baldwin in the House of Commons nor Lord Birkenhead in the House of Lords dilated at any length on the work of the Commission on the day the announcement was made They left full discussion to take place in the course of the debate that was promised within a week In reply to a question the Prime Minister only remarked that a Committee of the Indian Legislature might be formed to assist the Commission in its work and that this Committee might remain permanently in life until the work of reviewing the Reforms was finished Beyond this neither he nor the Secretary of State said anything which would interest those who were most immediately concerned in the Commission and its work

It was left for His Excellency Lord Irwin to justify the appointment of the Commission and describe its procedure and plans of work in the long statement which he made on November 8 His Excellency began by pointing out that the Government of India Act of 1919 did not profess to embody irrevocable decisions and recognised that its work must be reviewed in the light of fuller knowledge Considerable pressure had been exerted to get the Commission appointed before the period of ten years

fixed by Parliament had expired His Majesty's Government did not feel justified in appointing the Commission so long as the non-co-operation movement was in existence in full strength in India

So long said His Excellency as the unwise counsels of political non-co-operation prevailed, it was evident that the conditions requisite for the calm appraisement of a complicated constitutional problem were lacking and an earlier enquiry would have been likely only to crystallise in opposition the two points of view between which it ought to be the aim and the duty of statesmanship to effect reconciliation. But there have been signs latterly that while those who have been foremost in advancing the claims of India for full self government have in no way abandoned the principles they have felt it their duty to assert yet there is in many quarters a greater disposition to deal with the actual facts of the situation and to appreciate what I believe to be most indubitably true namely that the differences which exist on these matters are differences of method or pace and not differences of principle or disagreements as to the goal which we all alike desire to reach

Another reason which the Viceroy advanced for the appointment of the Commission at this juncture was the communal tension prevailing in the country

It seems not impossible His Excellency said, that the uncertainty of what constitutional changes may be imminent may have served to sharpen this antagonism and that each side may have been consciously or unconsciously actuated by the desire to strengthen as they supposed their relative position in anticipation of the Statutory Commission. Wherever such activities might first begin the result is to create a vicious circle in which all communities are likely to feel themselves constrained to extend their measures

of self-defence The fact that these fierce antagonisms are incompatible with the whole idea of Indian nationalism has not been powerful enough to exercise its influence over great masses of people in all classes and I suspect that the communal issue is so closely interwoven with the political that suspense and uncertainty in regard to the political react rapidly and unfavourably upon the communal question. Fear is frequently the parent of bad temper and when men are afraid as they are today, of (the effect unknown political changes may have they are abnormally ready to seek relief from and an outlet for their fears in violent and hasty action

As regards the terms of reference within which the Commission would work, His Excellency repeated the words of the Government of India Act In the words of the Statute, it (the Commission) will be charged with enquiring into the working of the system of Government, the growth of education, and the development of representative institutions in British India and it should report as to whether and to what extent it is desirable to establish the principle of responsible government, modify, or restrict the degree of responsible government then existing in India, including the question whether the establishment of Second Chambers of the local legislatures is or is not desirable

The Viceroy justified the principle on which the appointment of the Commission was made by the plea, worn hollow by repetition in the press of Great Britain, that it was of the utmost importance to get a unanimous

report from the Commission and that such a unanimous report would be impossible if Englishmen and Indians sat together as colleagues. The Viceroy did not adduce any cogent reason for this belief. The feelings of Indian nationalist members and British officials (why the latter should find a place on the Commission was not explained) would, in the opinion of the Viceroy, inevitably cloud their judgment. "And even after such a Commission had written its report, Parliament would inevitably approach consideration of it with some element of mental reservation due to an instinctive feeling that the advice in more than one case represented views to which the holders were previously committed. It would move uncertainly among conclusions the exact value of which, owing to unfamiliarity with the minds of its framers, it would feel unable to appraise." But the Commission would by no means ignore Indian opinion.

"Indian Opinion," His Excellency said, "has a clear title to ask that in the elaboration of a new instrument of government their solution of the problem or their judgment on other solutions which may be proposed should be made an integral factor in the examination of the question and be given due weight in the ultimate decision." Indians were to join in the deliberations of the Commission by a

complicated system of committees 'appointed by the central and provincial legislatures, the former of which could even appear before the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian affairs which would consider the report of the Royal Commission.

When the Commission has reported and its report has been examined by the Government of India, it will be the duty of the latter to present proposals to Parliament. But it is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to adopt these proposals without first giving a full opportunity for Indian opinion of different schools to contribute its views upon them. And to this end it is intended to invite Parliament to refer these proposals for consideration by a Joint Committee of both Houses and to facilitate the presentation to that Committee of the views of the Indian Central Legislature by delegations who will be invited to attend and confer with the Joint Committee and also of the views of any other bodies whom the Joint Parliamentary Committee may desire to consult. In the opinion of His Majesty's Government the procedure fulfils to a very great extent the requisites outlined above.

The Viceroy concluded his statement with an appeal for tolerance, friendship and mutual understanding between the people of India and Great Britain which, in spite of its moving eloquence was, naturally, ineffective in the case of the people of India. The Viceroy did not minimise the possibility of difference of opinion. "It is," said he, "though difference of opinion and clash of judgment that it is given to us ultimately to approach the knowledge of the truth. It is

also inevitable that on issues so momentuous difference of judgment will be founded on deep and sincere conviction. But if difficult, our general line of conduct is surely plain. Where possible it is our duty to bring these differences to agreement, where this is at any given moment not possible without surrender of something fundamental to our position, it is our duty to differ as friends, each respecting the standpoint of the other and each being careful to see that we say or do nothing that will needlessly aggravate differences which we are unable immediately to solve."

THE RECEPTION.

The formal announcement of the constitution of the Commission on November 8 was the signal for a widespread chorus of disapproval, indignation and protest in India. Political, religious and communal differences were forgotten in the general opposition to the decision of his Majesty's Government to exclude Indians from the Commission. The Indian Press was practically unanimous in its opinion that the exclusion of Indian representatives was the most serious blunder that could have been committed. The argument that Indian opinion could not be adequately represented except by the appointment of a dozen or a score of Commissioners to represent the various political and religious interests in the country was treated with the contempt it deserved. It would not have been wrong to infer from the state of opinion prevailing immediately before and after the announcement was made that the inclusion of two or three Indians of undoubted capacity, and in whose impartiality all communities and interests would have confidence, would have secured a warm welcome

in India for the Commission. It cannot be pleaded by Lord Birkenhead that there are no Indian leaders who would not act in the interests of the nation at large and not alone in the interests of their particular communities. The premature death of Lord Sinha would have prevented him in any case from working on the Commission though his was the name that suggested itself to everyone when the question of the inclusion of Indians on the Commission was talked of. But his inclusion would at least have demonstrated the willingness of the Secretary of State and the British Parliament to meet Indian opinion half way.

Another name that suggested itself in regard to the Commission was that of the Aga Khan. His Highness would surely not have refused if he had been approached by His Majesty's Government. Though not a Ruling Prince himself, His Highness the Aga Khan's interests are closely bound up with those of the Princely order in India. His appointment on the Commission would have enabled the Royal Commission to envisage more correctly than they will now be able to do, the difficulties that must be faced in reconciling the autocratic government of the States with the representative de-

mocracy of British India. The terms of the Government of India Act of 1919 do not lay down arbitrarily that a purely Parliamentary Commission must examine the working of the reformed constitution. There was no bar to the appointment of an outsider had the Cabinet been inclined to make one.

Impartiality is, no doubt, a desirable quality in a Commission entrusted with judgment on momentuous issues. But ignorance is not. It was pitiable to read the confession of one of the members of the Commission after he had visited a number of places in India that he was not able to make out what exactly was the condition of the country. He formed one impression at one place and another at another place. It is a matter for speculation whether the members of the Royal Commission will have mastered the rudiments of their education in matters Indian by the time they are expected to make their report.

The danger is serious that they will form their conclusions from hazy ideas of the necessities of this country gathered from such prejudiced witnesses as Sir Michael O'Dwyer and Sir Reginald Craddock or from vague notions that the East is East and the West is West and that never the twain would meet and that, therefore, a constitution based Wes-

tein democratic principles would not fit Eastern conditions

Prominent members of the Indian Liberal party were as forward, if not more so, than extreme Swarajists in condemning the constitution of the Commission. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was almost the first to express his disapproval. In a short statement to the Press on the morrow of the Commission's appointment, he declared that so far as he was personally concerned, he would have nothing to do with it.

Sir Tej Bahadur explained himself at greater length in a statement a few days after the Viceroy's announcement. He was very bitter at the lack of trust in Indians that was shown by the Secretary of State and the Viceroy, in keeping everything relating to the Commission entirely secret from Indian non official leaders while officials in India and politicians in England were taken into confidence. Indians were only too willing to place the benefit of their experience and advice at the disposal of the Secretary of State. But he gave them the cold shoulder. "Lord Birkenhead," said Sir Tej Bahadur, "had now stated that he had taken several leaders and several politicians in England into his confidence in discussing this matter,

but how many leaders of Indian thought who happened to be in England at the time had the good fortune of seeing his Lordship?" In this bitterness we see the germs of the boycott movement Lord Birkenhead has no one to blame but himself and his secretive and distrustful methods for the alienation of Indian sympathies which led to the non co-operation of Indian leaders with the Commission

Indian opinion, of course, cannot be said to have been absolutely unanimous in regard to the Commission. A section of the Mahomedan community led by Sir Mahomed Shafi of Lahore expressed itself in favour of co-operation. But the leaders who had really led the Muslims for the past many years, whose voice had long been accepted as the voice of the community, men like Sir Abdur Rahim of Calcutta and Mr Mahomed Ali Jinnah of Bombay, declared in favour of boycott. There were also some representatives of the Non Brahmins and the Depressed Classes who were in favour of co operation. Their object, however, was plain. They thought that the non cooperation of the more advanced communities was a golden opportunity for them to secure advantages which had long been denied. The European community in India was also, naturally enough,

in favour of co-operation. But even among them there were those who held that a mixed Commission would have been preferable to a purely European body.

Mr. Arthur Moore, one of the most thoughtful among the Europeans in India, was of opinion that a mixed Commission would have been better. "I should have preferred a mixed Commission," he said, "and my impression is, that a majority of unofficial English would also have done the same. Modern businessmen dislike whatever accentuates racialism. but I am chiefly concerned with the possibilities of the Joint Committee."

The following are brief extracts from the statements made by some of the most prominent Indian leaders on their attitude to the Commission.

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad.

The reason and object of accelerating the appointment of the Commission is to respect the persistent Indian demand in that behalf and thereby to secure the goodwill and trust of India. If in so doing they create a situation whereby, instead of securing goodwill they bring about a widespread dissatisfaction and suspicion as to the *bona fides* of the British Government, they not only throw away all the good effects likely to be created by acceleration but create positive distrust and antagonism. This action of the British Government will surely bring strength and give a new lease of life to the extreme element in Indian politics. It would have been better not to have accelerated the Commission if it was to

be done in this way The value of the proposal to associate a committee of the Indian Legislature with the work of the Commission and later on with the work of the Joint Parliamentary Committee is attempted to be very much exaggerated. Any one with experience of such Commissions fully realises what enormous difference it makes in the collection of proper materials and gathering and sifting of evidence if one is a member of the Commission instead of being merely being allowed to represent and put our case before the Commission. The idea running throughout the entire scheme is that Indians are to be given no authoritative voice in the conduct of the enquiry and the decisions to be taken by way of recommendations however much they may be conceded opportunities to represent and submit the Indian view.

In moving a boycott resolution at a great public meeting of the citizens of Pomhay at Cowasji Jehangir Hall on November 19 Sir Chimanlal put his views in even more forcible language.

The exclusion of Indians from the Commission he said raises an issue involving a fundamental principle. We cannot possibly agree to the principle underlying the action of the British Government that Indians are not to have equal participation in the task of determining the future constitution of the country. The implication of the action of Government is that there are no Indians available of sufficient integrity ability and impartiality to sit on the Commission. We repel this suggestion as unworthy and untrue. We are clear about this that no conceivable reasons can justify the wholesale exclusion of the Indian element from the Commission.

Sir Dinshaw Petit.

Sir Dinshaw Petit Bart one of the most respected of Bombay's public men whose words carry all the more weight because they come from one who seeks no personal end and one who has retired from the rough and tumble of politics, presiding over a public demonstration expressed the same opinion. He said—

We consider it to be derogatory to our sense of self respect that we should not have any people of our own country on the Commission that is going to decide our own and our country's destiny. But the principle involved is not merely a question of self respect. We go further and say that we cannot have any confidence in the findings of such a Commission for if we could have capable Indians on the same they would not only examine witnesses and statements from India's point of view but by persuasion and argument they would be able to influence the conclusions which the Commission would arrive at. Therefore it would be futile on our part to associate ourselves with the work of the Commission so long as its constitution is not changed to the satisfaction of the Indian public. The feeling which I have depicted is not that of any particular political party or India or of any one section of the politically minded people of the country but is general throughout all classes and amongst all sections and Government could not have any doubts whatsoever about this if they would just see for themselves the representative nature of this gathering and of the signatories to the manifestoes that have been issued by leading people in all parts of the country.

Mr M A Jinnah

Mr Jinnah who also spoke at the meeting expressed himself very strongly. He said —

The decision is that this Commission should be composed exclusively of Englishmen. It is not a matter of sentiment. It is a matter of broad principle and therefore we cannot under any circumstances accept the exclusion of Indians from the Commission. It has been said that we are carried away by sentiment. May I ask this question why are the Indians excluded? If that is merely a question of sentiment and there is no practical difficulty about it or no serious objection to it why don't you include Indians?

In a statement which he made immediately after the announcement by the Viceroy Mr Jinnah said —

The suggestion to associate a committee of the central and provincial legislatures with the Commission and later with the Joint Committee may be a clever device. But constitutionally Indians are powerless and their position will not enable them to have any voice in the final decision and practically their efforts at that stage having regard to their position, are not likely to bear any fruit.

Sir Pheroze Sethna.

The main reason advanced for having no others than Englishmen on the Commission is that they would be absolutely unbiassed. There is of course, an Indian in the House of Lords and another in the House of Commons. But in the estimation of Lord Birkenhead even Lord Sinha is unfit to serve on the Commission because of his nationality. Are the seven Englishmen appointed absolutely unprejudiced men? Could we for one moment regard Lord Burnham as an unprejudiced member of the Commission when day in day out the newspaper which he controls neither spares India nor sees any good in the best of Indians? Indians are expected to appear before the Commission as witnesses. Where is the necessity of going through such a farce when there will be no Indians on the Commission itself to point out to their colleagues what is right or wrong and what will or will not satisfy India in the decisions that the Commission will arrive at? I think that the best witness before the Commission will be Miss Mayo and if she is not there in person we know that every member of the Commission, because he is a member of the one House of Parliament or the other, has been provided with a free copy of her book.

Sir Devaprasad Sarvadhikari.

The findings of some of its own member can count in advance upon a favourable reception at the hands of Parliament which will recognise them to speak from a common platform of thought and to be applying standards of judgment which Parliament will feel instinctively to be its own. For myself I cannot doubt that the quickest and surest path of those who

desire Indian progress is by the persuasion of Parliament and that they can do this more effectively through both houses of Parliament than in any other way. The Indian nationalist has gained much if he can convince members of Parliament upon the spot and I would therefore go further and say that if those who speak for India have confidence in the case which they advance on her behalf they ought to welcome such an opportunity being afforded to as many members of the British Legislature as may be, thus to come into contact with the realities of Indian life and politics.

Sir Abdur Rahim.

One of the most interesting of the innumerable statements made regarding the constitution of the Commission was that of Sir Abdur Rahim of Calcutta. As a member of the Public Services Commission Sir Abdur had put up a strenuous fight for Indian interests. But when after a long spell of official life as a Judge of the Madras High Court and a Member of the Executive Council of the Governor of Bengal, he again returned to public life, he did so as a rank, and it was thought, an incurable, communalist who was absolutely unable to take a national view. It was generally expected that like Sir Mahomed Shafi, Sir Abdur Rahim would welcome the purely Parliamentary nature of the Commission as an opportunity for the Muslim community. But Sir Abdur showed when the occasion demanded it, that his patriotism could rise above narrow communal sympathies. He said —

The Statutory Commission announcement in the Viceroy's statement implies an abrupt wholly unexpected and most momentous departure from the attitude which the British Governments of various political parties have been repeatedly defining towards India and Indians. It amounts to this. India's sons are not to have any responsible part in co-operation with men of the British race in recommending a suitable constitution for their country. This indeed, is a violation, to start with, of the policy of the very Government of India Act of 1919 under which the Commission has been appointed.

The proposed conference with a Select Committee of the Central Legislature after the Commission has prepared its report does not minimize the significance of the fact that the recommendations will be those of the Commission and of none else. For a long time past there has been no important Commission dealing with the affairs of India without Indian representation. The Islington Public Services Commission to which allusion has been made in some newspapers (Sir Abdur Rahim was a member of this Commission) consisted of eleven members of whom three were Indians and one an Anglo Indian exclusive of those who were co-opted assessors in the different provinces. Such co-opted assessors or members whatever you may call them contributed hardly anything to the deliberations or recommendation of the Commission itself. No doubt on some of the constitutional and political issues that will have to be considered by the Statutory Commission acute differences of opinion do exist among Indian politicians but the proper course was to include in the Commission the leaders of different schools of political thought in India say five men and to saddle them with the responsibility of agreeing upon an adequate and working scheme of responsible government in collaboration with the English statesmen. If they failed to do so and frittered away their opportunity in mutual bickerings the British Parliament could well have held that India was not yet fit for any considerable advance in self government.

A serious blunder has been committed and it is surprising that the three Indian members of the Viceroy's Council should have been unable to save Lord Irwin from the unenviable position in which he has been placed. This is all the more remarkable as he is a gentleman anxious to conciliate Indian public opinion.

Mr K C Roy

Mr K. C. Roy, a non-partis Member of the Assembly said —

The announcement has caused me no surprise as the appointment of the Statutory Commission is in

keeping with the traditions of the Baldwin Ministry. The decision is against the very principle underlying the Government of India Act of 1919, which lays down a policy of increasing association of Indians with the high functions of government.

What worries me most is the menacing character of the announcement reopening the whole question of the suitability or otherwise of Western institutions to India, as well as a postmortem examination of the principles as well as details of the Reforms Scheme of 1919. There may be even a serious attempt to go back upon what was given to India by the Montford Reforms. It is therefore the duty of Indian leaders of all shades of political thought carefully to consider the whole scheme and if they come to the decision of boycotting the Commission which would be unfortunate to formulate an alternative scheme of their own for the attainment of Swaraj. The destructive policy pursued by the Congress leaders in the past will not help to attain what we may call Constitutional Swaraj.

Mr N. C. Kelker.

The Government insist upon the fulfilling, or rather exacting the fulfilment, of the conditions of progress noted in the preamble of the Reforms Act of 1919. It is for Government, therefore, to come forward with constructive proposals of their own if they have got any and then it will be for the Indian leaders to consider them and to offer views and criticism. But on the other hand if the Committee is coming out to put Indian leaders on their defence and to seek to put them in the wrong by cross examination then there is only one course open to them, namely, severely to boycott the Commission.

Sir Sivswamy Iyer.

The argument that a Commission composed of members of Parliament alone, with a majority of Tories, would be an unbiassed body free from preconceived notions and that it would be the only body whose report Parliament would be prepared to accept without mental reservation and that the conclusions of a mixed commission with an Indian element even after passing through the filter of the Joint Select

Committee of Parliament could not be appraised by Parliament owing to its unfamiliarity with Indian psychology are complementary neither to Indians nor to Parliament. The exclusion of Indians from the Commission is a studied insult to the Indian public and very ill advised.

Mr. M. R. Jayakar.

The Parliamentary Commission as constituted can be said to have the merit of having no bad Indians on it which in itself is no small mercy. Government would be well advised even now to retrace their steps and to meet Indian opinion evenly, as in politics what sells is not abstruse logic but the elements of goodwill and understanding.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu

Britain should not undervalue the far reaching significance of the unequivocal and unanimous refusal on the part of responsible representatives of the most diverse schools of Indian political thought and temperament to countenance the proposed court of inquisition with its arbitrary constitution and its mediocre personnel.

Sir M. Visveswarayya

The Commission will not be satisfactory unless half the number of members are Indians. There is no reference to Dominion status or the Federal system of government or India's existing handicaps and needs.

Dr. Annie Besant

The impudent attempt of a discredited Government.

Sir P. Thakurdas and Sir M. Ramji

The announcement by his Excellency the Viceroy is not one on which any Indian can congratulate the British Cabinet or the Government of India for their concurrence with the former.... The omission (of Indians) is one which cannot but be regarded as a humiliation to India and Indians. As Indians have been excluded from seats on the Commission there is hardly any doubt that no assistance would be

required from them in any other direction and we feel (speaking in our personal capacities) that it would be difficult to find self-respecting Indians willing to assist a Commission thus constituted

Lala Lajpat Rai

It is a mere eye wash and the worst possible scheme which could be formulated from the Indian point of view. To all intents and purposes it is an *ex parte* trial and *in camera*. The Commission will merely report what the Anglo-Indian statesmen have already decided or will dictate. The personnel of the Commission inspires no confidence.

Sir Mahomed Shafi

His Majesty's Government have in my judgment committed a grievous mistake in excluding Indian representatives from the Royal Commission. The decision thus taken by them is unprecedented not only in the past history of British India but also of the British Empire.

Mr S Srinivasa Iyengar

The Commission as constituted was the most comprehensive and conspicuous insult to the Indian people and to all political parties, leaders and workers. No guarantee of full *Swaraj* or Dominion status was given and therefore the Congress had to decide in favour of complete boycott of the Commission in all parts and aspect.

Mr Yakub Hassen

It would be useless and futile to boycott the Commission for the simple reason that the boycott was not likely to be an effective boycott and would only betray our impotency.

Mr B C Pal

A calculated attempt to deceive Indian politicians. We need another baptism in the fire.

Mr K C Neogy

I do not think that any true nationalist can fall in with the scheme put forward by His Excellency.

Sir H. S. Gour

It is a great disappointment to find that the Commission is constituted without any representative of India on it. If it was intended that the Commission should be purely Parliamentary there was nothing to prevent the appointment of Lord Sinha as one of its members. The Commission will at any rate do one good. It will remind the people of India of the value of concerted action.

Sir Ali Imam

The exclusion of Indians from the membership of the Commission is an emphatic assertion of British Imperialism and a negation of India's partnership in the Empire. The only reply that Indians can give is a united and unwearying boycott to be carried on till the insult is wiped off.

DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT

No serious opposition was encountered in Parliament to the appointment of the Statutory Commission. All parties were practically unanimous in the opinion that what Mr. Baldwin and Lord Birkenhead had done was the best under the circumstances. The few opposition voices like those of Colonel Wedgwood and Mr. Saklatwala were lost amidst the general chorus of approval. And, indeed, the Secretary of State for India and the Premier had lost no opportunity of explaining their policy before the British public. Every one of their public addresses in the weeks preceding the announcement of the appointment of the Commission contained some reference to India. This country became for some time a more important issue in British politics than it had been for a long time past.

As if to help Lord Birkenhead in his propaganda came the timely publication of *Mother India*. The book with its morbid appeal to the worse side of human nature had an enormous sale in England, probably greater than any other book relating to India in recent times. Though thinking people in England

might have seen through the falsehoods with which it bristles, it is certain that it prejudiced large sections of the public against India. The rumour, published in the Indian press and widely believed, that *Mother India* was published with official countenance has been authoritatively denied. But it is an admitted fact that copies of the book were freely distributed to members of the two houses of Parliament and probably also to others interested in Indian questions.

One of the most important speeches on Indian policy made by Mr Baldwin outside Parliament was at the annual Lord Mayor's Banquet. The Prime Minister pointed out to his audience, which, as he himself said, included not only his immediate hearers but also the wider public served by the Indian and the British press, that the issue before the Statutory Commission was of vital importance not only to India but also to the British Empire. Justifying the non-inclusion of Indians in the Commission he said —

In including in the Commission not merely no Indians but no Englishmen who have been associated hitherto with the Government or commerce of India, our sole desire paradoxical as it may seem was to give the real responsible and instructed opinion among Indians the best chance of playing an effective and constructive part in devising a solution."

"Cannot we have done" Mr. Baldwin asked," with mutual suspicions and jealousies with strife of caste with caste of religion with religion, of nation with nation, of East with West? Cannot we have done with the spinning of phrases which cannot square with the hard facts of life because they ignore them? If we cannot, the future is dark indeed. If we can approach with the common determination to build for posterity upon the best and surest foundations, then whatever the future may have in store as the fruit of its labours, the Statutory Commission will go down in history as the instrument and symbol of a new era."

The Prime Minister's words were eloquent enough, but his actions, and those of his colleagues, by no means encourage the hope among the people of this country that they mean anything serious.

The attitude of the British Labour party on the Statutory Commission is very interesting. Colonel Wedgwood, one of the few members of Parliament who take sincere interest in the problems of India, was from the very first against Labour members taking any part in the Statutory Commission. He shared the opinion of leaders in this country that the exclusion of Indians was an unpardonable insult and that Indians were perfectly justified in refusing to have anything to do with the Commission and its investigations. Mr. George Lansbury and some others who constitute the left wing of the British Labour Party, however, did not go so far as Colonel Wedgwood in their condemnation of the decision of the

Cabinet They knew and admitted that the exclusion of Indians from the Commission was a very serious mistake But in their opinion it would be as bad a mistake if Indians non co operated with the Commission

Commander Kenworthy, another Lahoreite who takes much interest in Indian questions, took up almost the same attitude as Mr Lansbury In an interview with a Press representative immediately after the Commission was announced he said that it ought to have upon it not only representative Indians but also representatives of the Native States who were equally interested in the future and prosperity of India He considered that the Labour nominations to the Commission were the best that could be made He regretted the attitude of boycott that Indians were said to be taking up in regard to the Commission He was of opinion that such a move would be playing into the hands of the reactionaries and Imperialists in England and India He strongly appealed to leaders of Indian thought to weigh this aspect of the question before they took any decision as it would have far reaching repercussions

Sir John Simon, as President of the Commission, could not, of course, be expected to express any opinion on the working or the

prospects of the Commission. But he wrote a letter to his constituents in Spenn Valley which would certainly have had an important influence in forming public opinion in England.

"The Commission," declared Sir John, "does not go to India with any idea of imposing Western ideals or constitutional forms from without. We go to listen, learn and faithfully report our conclusions with regard to the actual conditions and varying proposals made from within."

The opinion of the British Press, both weekly and daily, was favourable to the Commission. Some of the more progressive papers showed a tendency to criticise the non-inclusion of Indians. But all sections were unanimous in criticising the movement for boycott in India. Opinion in England as reflected in the debate on the Commission in the two Houses of Parliament, was almost unanimous in favour of the Commission. Some of the Nationalist leaders in India expected much from the Labour party. But when it came to an actual test, it was found that Labour's knowledge of, and desire to help, India was confined, in the vast majority of cases, to a few broad generalisations. In 1924 Labour took up office as the friends of

India and it was left to them in their brief tenure of power to inflict on India the most grievous injustice it has been the fate of this country to suffer in the past many years in the shape of the Bengal Ordinance. The Parliament debate showed the Parties in their true colours, Labour ignorant, but with a vague desire to help India, the Conservatives with a full knowledge of Indian problems, but active in their object of suppressing this country's aspirations.

The Secretary of State being in the House of Lords, it was natural that the chief debate should take place in that House. The formal motion which Lord Birkenhead put before the House of Lords was that "This House concurs in the submission to His Majesty of the names of the following persons, namely, Sir John Simon, Viscount Burnham, Lord Strathearn and Mount Royal, Mr Cadoogan, Mr Walsh, Major Attlee and Colonel Lane Fox to act as a Commission for the purpose of Section 84 A of the Government of India Act of 1919."

Lord Birkenhead, as was expected, devoted the major part of his speech to justifying the appointment of a purely Parliamentary Commission. "The question," He said, "is, should this Commission be a Parliamentary Commission consisting of members of

Commons and the House of Lords, or should it be a Commission on which Indian members would have found a place? I have given for four years, ever since I undertook the responsibilities of this office, my deep and constant attention to this topic, I have satisfied myself, and I am not without hope that I shall satisfy your Lordships and the public, that the decision which I recommend is not only right but is the only decision which is reconcilable with the very purposes which all of us have in view." The Secretary of States's first argument was that Parliament and Parliament alone was responsible for the Government and welfare of India, and that it would not be true to itself and to the trusteeship of Britain in India if it failed to appoint a Commission of any but its own members.

Lord Birkenhead in his talks with many distinguished Indians in the last three years had, it appears, asked them this question — "Do you desire that the British army should be withdrawn from India, do you desire that the Civil Service should be withdrawn from India, do you desire that the protection of the British navy should be withdrawn from Indian shores?"

He had never found one Indian, however hostile to the British Government, who desir-

ed that the civil service, the army and the navy should be withdrawn from India. Since Indians were not prepared to take up the work of administration and defence immediately, and looked to Parliament to do it, it followed clearly in his Lordship's mind that Parliament alone should decide questions of government.—

The Secretary of State asked:—

Does anyone really suppose that the Parliament of this country which by Act of Parliament assumed to itself the responsibilities and functions of the Company, which, as the historical facts that I have shortly stated, show, is still confronted by precisely the same problems in India as confronted our predecessor at the moment, when in the first place the activities of our commercial and trading bodies, supported by the force of arms composed the warring sects of India, when it is conceded that our withdrawal to-morrow would reproduce precisely the conditions which existed when we went there how can anyone in those circumstances pretend that, whatever point may be disputable, the responsibility of Parliament not only does not still survive but is not an exclusive responsibility from which Parliament cannot divorce itself, without being false to the long glorious history of the association of England and India?

If this be the responsibility of Parliament, considerations of no small importance arise. I had to decide before making a recommendation to my colleagues which they accepted as to the character of this Commission, whether or not it ought to be a Parliamentary Commission. This, as I understand is the point in relation to which doubts are principally entertained by those who criticise our proposal. Let me, therefore, examine it with the indulgence of the House with some care. If I am right in saying that it was Parliament which was responsible for the first

momentous change which deprived the Company of its political activities if from that moment Parliament has been charged with responsibility how can we divorce ourselves from that responsibility at this moment? Observe it is only eight years since this same Parliament by what is known as the Montagu Chelmsford reforms by a great public act created the constitution which is now to be the subject of revision and re examination It is sometimes said by our critics in India that it is for a Round Table Conference or a Congress in India to decide upon the form of constitution suitable for themselves and then for the British Parliament formally to pass it This suggestion has not been lightly made It has been seriously made by men who are entitled that their observation shall be seriously accepted

I only make this comment I have twice in the three years during which I have been Secretary of State invited our critics in India not only to put forward their own suggestions for a constitution but indicate to us the form which in their judgment the constitution should take That offer is still open It is most expressly repeated as I shall show in a moment in these proposals which we make for the association of Indians in the activities of the Commission

If at all His Majesty's Government had been minded to include Indians in the Commission, it would have been absolutely impossible, in Lord Birkenhead's opinion, to find out representatives who could speak authoritatively "on behalf of their communities" The Statutory Commission was to be a jury on the approved British model, consisting of men who are totally ignorant of the matters argued before them, before which the various communities in India would plead their case individually The Secretary of State showed an

entire inability to conceive of this country as anything but a conglomeration of separate and hostile communities. He did not even seem to think that even though there may be a number of communities, they might have many things in common, many subjects in which their interests are identical, and for which a common representation only would enable them to achieve anything tangible. Since, in his opinion, there existed nothing like a united India, Lord Birkenhead could not, of course, think of looking out for Indian members of the Commission who could have spoken for the country as a whole instead of for their special communities.

Men like the late Lord Sinha, and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Syed Ali Imam and Mr M A Jinnah, in whom all India without respect of communities can implicitly place its faith, could not come within Lord Birkenhead's circle of vision, simply because they were accustomed to speak for the country as a whole and not for their particular communities. The Secretary of State quoted with much unction a speech by Mr T C Goswamy at a Congress Committee meeting, "a meeting not altogether favourable to His Majesty's Government or to the present Secretary of State." "Mr Goswamy said that he did not know if there were any Mahomedan organi-

sations in the country which represented the opinion of Mahomedans but so far as he was aware in regard to his own community, he was certain that there was no such organisation which could speak in the name of the Hindu community." Why should the Secretary of State demand a special organisation to speak on behalf of the Hindu community? Could he not understand, in the absence of any such organisation, and that Hindus were prepared to stand as citizens of India and were ready to shoulder the duties and obligations of their citizenship without reference to the society they belonged to or to the religion which they professed? But the Cabinet started with the pre conceived notion that no Indian could be trusted to speak for any one but himself or his community.

"It would be impossible to form a Commission other than a Parliamentary Commission which would not excite reasonable complaints of exclusion on the part of persons who have very strong claims to be represented." The Secretary of State seems to have been referring particularly to the Depressed Classes. He continued —

"Let me take the case of the Depressed Classes. There is in India a vast population (even in relation to the numbers with which we are dealing a population of 60 millions of depressed classes. Their condi

tion is not quite as terrible, quite as poignant as it has been in the past but it is still terrible and poignant. They are repelled from all social intercourse. If they come between the gracious light of the sun and one who despised them the sun is disfigured for that man. They cannot drink at the public water supply, they must make diversions of miles in order to satisfy their thirst and they are known and they have been tragically known for generations as the untouchable. There are sixty millions of them in India. Am I to have a representative of theirs on the Commission? Never, never would I form a commission nor would anyone in a democratic country nor would my friends opposite recommend it from which you have excluded a member of this class which more than any other requires representation if you are indeed to put the matter to a mixed jury of the kind I am indicating.

The Secretary of State's fervour on behalf of the depressed classes is, indeed, admirable. But he ignored the fact that the emancipation of the Depressed Classes—so far as it has gone—has been brought about as much, if not more by the efforts of people belonging to advanced classes and non official European missionaries, as by the action of the Government. Indeed, it is the opinion of many who have worked long in the sphere of social reform that further progress is impossible so long as the government of the country is not in the hands of the representatives of the people.

But the Secretary of State's enthusiasm for the advancement of the Depressed Classes has, obviously enough, an object purely poli-

tical. He is intent not so much on removing the stigma of untouchability—Britain quietly shuts its eyes to the introduction of this very stigma in a much worse form in South Africa—than to establish the fact that India is divided within itself and that it is impossible to trust its people. The British Cabinet is collectively responsible for all its actions and Lord Birkenhead as a member of the Cabinet, therefore, cannot avoid a share of the responsibility for sanctioning the atrocious laws which reduce the majority of the population of South Africa to a state of practical helotry.

Lord Birkenhead's speech was one long attempt to apply the principle of divide and rule. Unlike some of the statesmen who controlled Indian policy before him, he could not see any trait in India which reminded him of a nation. To him India was nothing but a group of mutually antagonistic religions, communities and races, just prevented from flying at each other's throats by the power of the *Pax Britannica*. The Secretary of State in his anxiety to convict the Indian people of absolute inability to govern themselves did not even stop to reflect that the state of India as described by him is no credit to Britain herself. If Great Britain had been inclined to reform Indian society instead of filling her

own pockets, she had plenty of time to do so in the last century and a half Japan without the aid of any Western nation, and in a period barely a fifth of that during which Britain has ruled India, has succeeded in thoroughly recasting her social system. She had a system of untouchability as bad as that of India. But it is now little more than a name while untouchability still flourishes in India.

Lord Olivier's speech in the House of Lords, following immediately after that of Lord Birkenhead, disappointed Indian expectations. He wholeheartedly supported the constitution of the Commission. But he showed a more correct appreciation of Indian feelings on the subject of reform when he expressed the hope that after the report of the present Commission, Parliament would put an end to the ridiculous system of doing out self government in instalments at the end of every ten years. "He hoped that the Commission would place Indian affairs on a basis of continuous progress and development. He also hoped that this would be the final enquiry of this sort and that the Commission with the assistance of Indians, would formulate the lines on which continuous progress might be made."

Lord Reading justified the Parliamentary nature of the Commission because, in his opinion, it would be impossible to get Indians with a fair and open mind to serve on the Commission. He said —

The question I have put before myself and which I have no doubt the Secretary of State must have considered again and again is — Would it be possible to appoint a Commission in which the leaders of nationalist opinion could participate with the knowledge that they have not once but over and over again committed themselves to a definite view as to the policy for which they wished and from which they would not depart. It seems to me that it is really putting men on the Commission with the knowledge that the opinions they would express are the opinions they have already expressed. I am prepared to admit that they would sit on the Commission with every desire to be perfectly fair and keep an open mind. Nevertheless they have been thinking about the subject for a long time and as I have already indicated have already given pledges from which it seems very difficult for them to recede.

The debate in the House of Commons on November 25th was a repetition in a somewhat milder tone of what took place in the Upper House the day previous. Taking the cue from his chief, Lord Winterston tried to drive home to his hearers the internal disorder in India which would develop into political chaos once the guiding hand of Britain was withdrawn. It was his opinion, it was absolutely wrong to compare India with Southern Ireland or Egypt. He said —

If you examine the situation in India you do not find the Fellahs of Egypt cringing in awe before others of his countrymen like the Depressed Classes in India before the Brahmin high caste Hindu. Theoretically in a country like Egypt where the predominant religion is Islam everyone is equal before religious law. Take the case of South Ireland. I do not think I have ever seen in the history of Ireland such bitterness between Catholics and Protestants as between the Hindus and Moslems in Northern India. I do not intend to wound Indian feelings but in a debate of this kind we must face facts in order to come to a reasonable decision.

Mr Ramsay MacDonald, following the Under Secretary of State, made rather a long speech in which he justified the Labour Party's attitude of complete acquiescence with the policy that was followed by the cabinet. He repeated the argument of Lord Buxton that there were minorities in India, that the interests of those minorities must be safeguarded and that the only way of doing so was by having a purely Parliamentary Commission. He trotted out the stale argument that if there were Indian members on the Commission they would get not one report, but a series of reports.

Without in any way suppressing or thwarting opinion Mr MacDonald said it was desirable that when the enquiry was finished we should have a report that should really help us. What would be the report that we should get from a Royal Commission appointed in the same way as the one of which he was a member? It would be absolutely impossible to get a report they would get reports. There would be a majority report a whole series of minority re-

ports signed with various paragraphs in them with asterisks and footnotes amounting to a very considerable number appended and then the House instead of getting guidance for the Joint Parliamentary Committee which would be set up as the second stage of this enquiry, instead of having some sort of well sifted and co ordinated evidence and guidance would itself have to regard the various sections as if they were so many witnesses. The report of such a Commission would not carry this House beyond being in the position of listening to so many witnesses. He would like the evidence of witnesses to be sifted in such a way that it could be co ordinated and got into some sort of composite scheme that as far as human intelligence and ingenuity could would meet the various points of view and present a common photograph.

Mr. Saklatwala, as usual with him, provided an interesting interlude in the debate by his amendment to Earl Winterton's motion that "the House should invite Pandit Motilal Nehru to the bar of the House to explain Indian sentiments and guide the House as provided in the preamble of the Government of India Act of 1919 before concurring in the submission to His Majesty of the names of the persons forming the Commission." Of course, the amendment was negatived without a division.

The debates in the House of Lords and the House of Commons showed to the people of India that His Majesty's Government as well as the Opposition are united so far as Indian policy is concerned.

THE DECEMBER CONFERENCES.

The indignation felt by the Indian public at the omission of Indians from the Commission found concrete expression in the resolutions adopted by the various conferences, national as well as communal, which met at the end of December 1927. The Commission, as the most important political fact of the year, had the place of honour in the Presidential addresses and the discussions in most of the conferences. The majority of the opinions expressed were by no means complimentary to the Commission, even the most favourable being that it was a great mistake on the part of Parliament not to have included any Indian members. The Indian National Congress led the way by passing a resolution for the complete boycott of the Commission. The resolution stated —

Whereas the British Government have appointed the Statutory Commission in violation of India's right of self-determination this Congress resolves that the only self-respecting course for India to adopt is to boycott the Commission at every stage and in every form

'In particular (a) This Congress calls upon the people of India and all Congress organisations in the country (1) To organise mass demonstrations on the day of the arrival of the Commission in India and

similar demonstrations in the various cities of India which the Commission may visit. (2) To organise public opinion by vigorous propaganda so as to persuade Indians of all shades of political opinion effectively to boycott the Commission

"(b) This Congress calls upon the non official members of the Indian Legislatures and the leaders of political parties and the communities of India and all others not to give evidence before the Commission nor co operate with it in any manner public or private, nor attend the social functions given to them.

'(c) This Congress calls upon the non official members of the Indian Legislatures neither to vote for nor serve on the Select Committees that may be set up in connection with the Commission, and to throw out any other proposal, or motion, or demand for grants in connection with the work of the Commission.

'(d) This Congress also calls upon the Congress members of legislatures not to attend the meetings of legislatures while the Simon Commission is in India except for the purpose of preventing their seats being declared vacant or for the purpose of throwing out the Ministry or any of the purposes mentioned in Clause (c)

"(e) This Congress authorises the Working Committee to confer with and secure co operation, wherever possible with other organisations and parties with a view to make the boycott effective and complete "

Opinion in the Congress was, of course, unanimous on the resolution. The debate that followed Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar's motion was chiefly notable for the speech of Dr. Annie Besant. This veteran fighter for India's cause again came into active politics, after a period of partial retirement, to help in the boycott campaign against the Commission.

Dr Besant declared that the resolution was for the boycott of the Commission because the British Government had boycotted Indians in not appointing any of them. It was, therefore, a responsive boycott. 'When England had insulted India in this manner there was no other way but to reserve to themselves the right to fight on the principle of self determination. When England was in trouble over the war she gave a pledge of self determination to even tropical countries. But now that the danger was over, all those declarations had been thrown to the winds. India alone had the right to make her own constitution as Australia made her own.' Dr Besant denied the right of England to change any constitution which India would unitedly present.

The most brilliant of the series of speeches delivered during the conference week was undoubtedly that of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru as president of the Indian National Liberal Federation at Bombay. He demolished every one of the arguments that had been put forward by Lords Birlenhead and Winterton and called upon the Liberals of India not to give any co-operation to the Commission in its work. He said —

Much as the Liberal Party would like to work in an atmosphere of goodwill much as it would like to avoid all bitterness much as it would like to help in

the task of an ordered and safe development of the constitution it cannot be a party to an arrangement which is wholly destructive of that spirit of mutual confidence which alone can beget co-operation. It cannot be a party to anything which is inconsistent with the honour and self-respect of India and its moral right to effectively participate in the determination of its constitution nor can it in its zeal for cooperation forget its duty to its country in a crisis of this character. Much as it has differed in the past and much as it differs even now from certain other parties on questions such as those of civil disobedience and other forms of direct action it cannot compromise either its self-respect or the honour of the country. But it is not merely a question of self-respect. The larger interests of the country make it incumbent upon the Liberal Party to say to the Government plainly and unequivocally that it must repudiate not only the Commission which has been appointed but the entire spirit in which the question of India's further advance has been conceived by Parliament and the Government of India.

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad as Chairman of the Reception Committee also dealt with the question and forestalled the President of the Federation in his advice that the Liberals should have nothing to do with the Commission. Other noted leaders of the Liberal Party, like Mr C Y Chintamani of the United Provinces and Sir Sivaswami Iyer of Madras also spoke very strongly and feelingly on the insult that had been offered to India by the policy that his Majesty's Government had chosen to follow. Almost all the chief speakers at the Liberal Federation meeting had, unlike those at the Congress, held high and responsible office under the Crown.

Either as members of the Viceregal Executive Council or of those of the Provincial Governors, or as Ministers under the new constitution, they had gained first hand experience of administrative work in India. All of them, despised as "moderates" by the extreme section of Indian politicians, now stood shoulder to shoulder with them in common opposition to the Statutory Commission.

Perhaps of more importance in the political game than either the Indian National Congress or the Liberal Federation was the meeting of the Muslim League. As the largest minority community, the Mahomedans, so to say, hold the balance of power in the country. The Government of India and the Secretary of State had long realised the advantage of gaining the support of the Mahomedan community and using it as a lever to influence the policy of the Hindu and other communities. But so far as the Statutory Commission was concerned, all except a few—who could almost be counted on the fingers of a hand—of the better known leaders of the Muslim community were at one with the Hindus in their resolve not to take any share in its work. Sir Abdul Rahim, who since his retirement from the Executive Councilorship of Bengal had shown himself to be a strong communalist, declared strongly against the Commission.

SIR SYED ALI IMAM, former member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, also took the same line. Mr. Mahomed Ali Jinnah, who had never laid himself open to the charge of being a communalist, was, of course, in the forefront of those who opposed the Commission.

Only Sir Mahomed Shafi, with a section of Punjab Mahomedans, was in favour of co-operating with the Commission. In these circumstances great interest centred round the meeting of the All India Muslim League in Christmas week. As it happened, however, owing to internal quarrels, the Muslim League split into two sections, one meeting at Calcutta and the other at Lahore, under the inspiration of Mr. Jinnah and Sir Mahomed Shafi respectively. At the Lahore session the resolution relating to the Statutory Commission was moved by Mr. A.K. Ghuznavi of Bengal. It invited the leaders of all non-Muslim communities in India, to come to a satisfactory settlement with the Muslim community before the Royal Commission began its work. The resolution was discussed for four hours. An amendment was moved by Dr. Mahomed Alam to delete the last portion of the resolution. On being put to the vote, this was declared lost by the president. A division being challenged votes were taken by Provinces. Bengal,

Bombay, the United Provinces, and the North West Frontier Province delegates were almost unanimously against the amendment. Of the Punjab delegates, 63 were found in favour of the amendment and 101 against. On a question of the accuracy of the count being raised, the supporters of the amendment left the hall in a body on which the resolution was carried.

The Calcutta meeting of the League under the Presidentship of Maulvi Mahomed Yakub M L A, passed a resolution in favour of boycott. In his presidential address the Maulvi said that the reason why Government had refused to appoint the Commission previously when the people had wanted it and had chosen to send it out just at this juncture was apparent "The Government felt convinced that unity between the two communities was the least likely at this time and that therefore the Commission should be appointed at this juncture. Indians had been excluded because they would not have agreed on a common report. Was there any basis for this fear? There was the case of the Sken Committee which dealt with the most delicate problem of the defence of the country. Not only were all the Indian members unanimous in their recommendations, but Mr. Jinnah also made a European General sign the report."

The boycott resolution was moved in the Subjects Committee by no less a person than Sir Ali Imam. It emphatically declared that the Simon Commission and its procedure are unacceptable, as denying Indians the right to participate on equal terms with Englishmen in framing the constitution of the country and calling upon Mussalmans not to have anything to do with it in any form at any stage. Amendments were moved but they were not of great constitutional importance and were not accepted by the League. Subsequently the original resolution, as moved by Sir Ali Imam, was carried.

THE ASSEMBLY'S VERDICT

The Commission was timed to arrive in India on February 3. Before that day a vigorous campaign to induce Indian leaders to co-operate was undertaken. The Governors of Bombay and Bengal and other Provinces took all available opportunities to point out that boycott was a mistaken policy and that India had to gain much by putting her entire faith and trust in the Statutory Commission. Sir Leslie Wilson, the Governor of Bombay, made an appeal to the Indian public, inappropriately enough, at a dinner given by the Bombay branch of the European Association, in which he gave an assurance that whatever might be the constitution of the Commission, Parliament was committed to a policy of reform. "We," said His Excellency, "are pledged to a policy of reform, bound by Parliament's pledged word to advance on the difficult path of self-government for India, a path always difficult to any country but a path not necessarily thorny but one which is strewn with the boulders of difficulty and the crevices of disappointment. Equally, of course, we cannot as you say, turn back nor in the nature of consti-

tutional development can we stand still. Therefore, I fully agree with you that we must go forward, helped as we must be on our way, by all those who have at heart the real prosperity of this great country."

Sir Montagu Butler, in opening the budget session of the Central Provinces Legislative Council, made a very moderately worded appeal for co-operation. He said that he did not intend to disallow any motion regarding the Statutory Commission that might be brought forward, but he warned the members against committing themselves to a policy of boycott beforehand. "In the bigger affairs of life," he said, "and in matters of policy, difficulties loomed large when the atmosphere was disturbed but all difficulties vanished when the disputants came together and tried to understand each other's viewpoints."

Sir William Marris, who was in no small measure responsible for the framing of the dyarchical constitution, made a very strong appeal for cooperation in his farewell speech to the United Provinces Legislative Council. He said -

When the time comes for this Legislative Council to take its decision about electing a committee I hope that members will ask themselves certain questions. How can they expect to serve their country's cause by refusing to deal with the Commissioners? As far as Parliament is concerned it is certain that such refusal

will not fatally obstruct or hamper the enquiry which in any case will go on. It is certain that refusal means losing an opportunity of bringing advanced opinion in these provinces to bear upon the Commissioners in the most effective and representative manner and, to my mind, if the United Provinces Council does make that refusal it will suffer in the estimation of all coolly thinking people."

The most earnest appeal for co-operation was naturally made by H. E. the Viceroy in his opening speech to the Central Legislature at Delhi on February 2nd. His Excellency warned the members against mistaking shadows for reality.

'At the stage,' said the Viceroy 'when the Commission moves from the stage the Central Legislature has perhaps the greatest and most powerful means of influencing the further current of events. The Commission has been established with the assent and co-operation of all the British parties. They will carry through the enquiry with it is hoped, the generous assistance of all shades of Indian opinion. But whether such assistance is offered or withheld, the enquiry will proceed and a report will be presented to Parliament on which Parliament will take whatever action it deems appropriate. What then in India or Great Britain is to be gained by a policy of boycott? Neither I nor anyone else can predict the effect upon the Commission's report or later upon the mind of Parliament if many of those who claim to speak for India decide at every stage to stand wholly aloof from a task in which Parliament has solicited their assistance and collaboration. It is clearly possible for people to stand aside and withhold their contribution just as it will be possible for the Commission to prosecute its enquiry and, with the assistance at its disposal, reach conclusions in spite of such abstention. But at the least it would seem certain that such an attitude must interpose yet further obstacles to the discovery of that

more excellent way of mutual understanding which the best friends of India of every race will know to be requisite for her orderly evolution to nationhood

Arguments and appeals, from the Viceroy as well as others, fell on deaf ears. The Commission landed at Bombay on February 3 as arranged. The hartals and protests which occurred on that day were by no means complete. Neither could it be said that Sir John Simon and his colleagues had a reception of which they could be proud. The feeling in the country was too deep against the Commission to permit of any men of national importance to meet and welcome it. Full expression was given to this feeling in the debate on the Commission that took place in the Legislative Assembly on February 16th. The debate was generally recognised to be one of the most momentous that ever took place in the Assembly. The resolution for boycott was moved by Lala Lajpat Rai. It read —

“This Assembly recommends to the Governor General in Council to inform His Majesty's Government that the present constitution and the scheme of the Statutory Commission are wholly unacceptable to this House and that this House will, therefore, have nothing to do with the Commission at any stage in any form.”

Lala Lajpat Rai supported his motion in a lively speech which for terseness and brilliance has rarely been equalled in the history of the Legislative Assembly. His reasons for supporting the boycott were briefly three. Firstly, he had no faith in the *bona fides* of those who had appointed the Simon Commission. He did not believe that they were actuated by motives of justice and fairplay or by any regard for the interests of India.

Secondly, he had no faith in the competence of this Commission. Without meaning any reflection on Sir John Simon and his colleagues and giving them the greatest possible credit for the best of intentions, he held that they were not the men to solve the problems of India. Their ignorance of India, Indian history and Indian politics were said to be their great qualifications for the task before them. In Lala Lajpat Rai's opinion that was their greatest disqualification. The Indian problem was so vast and so complicated that even if the Gods were to descend from heaven they could not understand and digest it in a few months so as to be able to present a solution of it which would be acceptable both to India and England. They could do nothing in the circumstances which would be, really speaking, authoritative. With the best of intentions and

motives, the Commission could only be the gramophone of the Indian bureaucracy, and, eventually, the gramophone of the Secretary of State for India

Thirdly, the Lala had no faith in any Commission at all. The Indian problem was beyond the competence of Commissions. The past history of all Royal Commissions in India had been a history of disappointments and disillusionments, and he did not believe that the present Commission was going to be an exception. Lala Lajpat Rai pointed out how the numbers of the depressed classes had been daily put up. "The existence of the depressed classes had not been known till after the declaration of 1917. In the census of 1921 it went up from 30 to 52 millions, and now Mr. Coatsman had definitely put it at 60 millions."

Sir Zulfikar Ali Khan moved an amendment to the resolution which said that "the opinion of this House is that the procedure put forward by the Indian Statutory Commission merits favourable consideration by this Assembly." The Government supported the amendment. All the chief leaders of the Nationalist party spoke in favour of the resolution which was ultimately carried by 68 to 62 votes. The minority votes were, of course,

largely those of the Government and nominated members. The analysis of voting showed that the vast majority of the elected members among the Muslims also voted in favour of the resolution.

The Council of State took an entirely different line from that taken by the Assembly. The resolution put before it urged His Majesty's Government in connection with the Statutory Commission, to form a committee from among the members of the Central Legislature with authority to carry on preliminary work and to collect materials to be placed before the Commission, to co-operate with the Commission in examining witnesses in all the Provinces, to have access to all records that may be placed before the Commission, to review and supplement such evidence by requiring other witnesses to be examined and other records to be sent for, and to report to the Central Legislature, and also urging the Government to place the report of the Committee before Parliament for consideration along with the report of the Commission. Mr. P. C. D. Chari, who moved the resolution, supported it by a speech, the chief feature of which was its lack of strong and convincing arguments. Mr. Chari had to call in the aid of the *Hindu* scriptures, which enjoined tolerance and goodwill towards all, to buttress up his case. He made an appeal

to the Government of India to give the committee of the Central Legislature equal terms, equal status, and equal opportunities with the right to make a separate report.

The most logical speech on the side of co-operation was made by Sir Sankaran Nair.

"If it was possible," he said, "to work along with the Commission and influence its decision, let the Committee do so. Otherwise let it work on parallel lines and submit its report separately. If India was to frame a constitution it would not be valid unless it was sanctioned by Parliament. This was not denied. Even a scheme prepared by Congressmen must be put up for final ratification by Parliament. That being the case why should they not appoint a Committee which would have ample material to draw up a constitution? Whether the constitution was accepted or not by Parliament he did not care. At any rate India would have produced a constitution through a representative Committee with which America and other civilized parts of the world could be faced. Posterity would see what the present generation had done for it."

Ultimately, the Council of State decided to co-operate with the Statutory Commission but not on the basis of Mr. Chai's motion. It preferred the amendment brought by Sir Maneekji Dadabhoy which urged the Government to take steps for the election of representatives from the Council of State to participate in the joint conference as set out in the procedure of the Simon Commission. The Resolution as amended was carried by 34 against 13 votes.

Whatever may be thought about the wisdom of the boycott, it is not difficult to understand and sympathise with the objects of those who voted for it in the Indian Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Legislative Councils. The exclusion of Indians from the membership of the Commission has been taken, and rightly so, as a resilience on the part of His Majesty's Government from the declared policy of the equal partnership of India in the Commonwealth of Nations that forms the British Empire. The policy that dictated the appointment of the Statutory Commission in its present form, and the speeches in which the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and the Under Secretary of State enunciated it showed clearly that India was once more considered by British statesmen merely as a subject country, the people of which have no right or authority to interfere in questions regarding their future. It is this feeling of outraged self respect that is behind the boycott movement and no one can help sympathising with it.

A prominent Liberal leader who has had a short and stormy career in high office under the Government, in a talk with the present writer, said that it was immaterial whether Indians participated in the work of the Commission or not. The successive resolutions

of the Legislative Assembly and the demands put forward at the meetings of various national organisations and the investigations of the Muddiman Committee, were, he said, quite enough to explain the Indian point of view to Parliament. If the agents whom Parliament has sent are intelligent they can gather what they want from these. If, on the other hand, they are determined to ignore the Indian point of view, and foist on this country a new constitution which has already been determined upon in London they will do so whether Indian leaders co operate with them or not. Plausible on the face of it, this argument is far from complete. Neither the report of the Muddiman Committee nor the evidence of any of the witnesses before it outline a definite scheme of reforms. That Committee and the witnesses before it were concerned with the defects of the existing dyarchical constitution. The resolutions regarding further reforms which the Assembly passed on various occasions dealt with the immediate necessity of a further step forward but do not say definitely what that step is to be. The resolutions passed by, and the Presidential addresses delivered at, the Indian National Congress and the Indian National Liberal Federation also suffer from the same defect

There are a number of ready made constitutions before the public. Mrs Besant's Commonwealth of India Bill, the Swaraj for India Bill, drafted under the auspices of the Independent Labour Party and three Bills by Mr C Vijayaraghavachariar, Mr S. Srinivasa Iyengar and Mr A Rangaswamy Iyengar, are all well known. But they are all, more or less, individual efforts and have nothing behind them more solid than the personal prestige of their authors. There has been nothing so far which can be called a national demand by a united India. If such a demand can be framed before the Statutory Commission proceeds far with its work it is well and good. The Commissioners, and after them Parliament, cannot afford to ignore it. But in the absence of any such demand the Commission will proceed to take evidence piecemeal and frame their own proposals, perhaps reactionary. A Committee of the Indian Central Legislature working alongside the Commission may not, perhaps, be able to achieve much. But here we have Sir John Simon's word, given over and over again, that the Indian Committee will be given the fullest scope. A Committee of the Council of State alone, which is all that will probably be appointed now, lacks that representative character which would have

attached to a Committee of the whole of the Central Legislature. But if no change in the constitution of the Indian Committee is made, it will be impossible to get the co-operation of the Legislative Assembly. And without such co-operation the Commission's work will be a failure.

Perhaps the best that can be done under the circumstances will be to raise the Committee of the Indian Central Legislature, consisting of seven members like the Royal Commission itself, to the status of the latter. It must be given a Royal Warrant like the Commission and must be entitled to present its own report. In fact, it must be constituted into a separate Commission. It is a bold step to take. But it is the only step that will induce India and the Indian Central Legislature to give its full and hearty co-operation to the Commission in its work. Sir John Simon will, it is to be hoped, give this advice to Lord Birkenhead and Mr Baldwin on his return home and justify the faith that has been reposed in his statesmanship. A Committee of the Central Legislature may not draw up a report identical with that of the Royal Commission. It may, in fact, it is certain that it will, differ in fundamental res-

pects. Parliament, however, can use the existing Royal Commission to check the recommendations of the Indian Commission and frame the final recommendations.

EASTERN OR WESTERN?

The Statutory Commission is entrusted with the task, not merely of suggesting remedies for the defects that have been disclosed in the working of the Dyarchical constitution. It is to follow the precedent of the Parliamentary enquiries into the affairs of India that took place in the time of the East India Company and to investigate generally into the material, moral and educational progress of this country. Mr. Montagu when he framed the Government of India Act introduced this system to rouse the interest of Parliament in the affairs of this country, to make India once more a first class issue in British politics as in the days of Burke, Pitt and Fox.

It is surprising that a discerning politician like him did not realise the ridiculous nature of a Parliamentary inquest of the old model into the affairs of India now. In the old days the Government of India was in the hands of the Company, a body entirely distinct from His Majesty's Government. The periodical enq-

unies instituted by Parliament were the only means by which it could keep a check over the administration of the country. These conditions altered when the Government of India was taken over directly by the Crown. The Cabinet, and through it Parliament, is now directly responsible for the good administration of India. There is no meaning in Parliament sitting in judgment over its own conduct. When such ample means as already exist for rousing Parliamentary interest in India have not succeeded, it is futile to hope that the report of the Statutory Commission will succeed in doing so. It will not certainly do so if one may judge from the tone of the debate in Parliament on the appointment of the Statutory Commission. But the Commission in the hands of a Government not well disposed towards India may act as a powerful weapon of reaction. Its report may provide arguments for going back on policies already adopted and reversing decisions which are considered final. That the Statutory Commission is fully empowered to recommend fundamental changes, which may go to the very roots of the Indian constitution as it exists, is evident not only from its terms of reference but from the speeches made in support of its appointment. In the statement in which the Viceroy announced the

appointment of the Commission he said clearly that the Commission is entrusted not alone with the work of suggesting amendments in the existing Government of India Act. Its scope, according to His Excellency is wider. The Commissioners are called upon to judge whether the whole system of Western representative institutions is fit for India or not.

This idea, that Western institutions are not fit for India and that this is the root cause of all the troubles, constitutional and otherwise, that have occurred in India in recent years, may be seen clearly expressed in a number of recent pronouncements on the Indian question. British officials who are unable to understand the trend of events in modern India go back to their own country with the idea that all that is wrong with India is that Western representative institutions are not fit for her and that everything will be right as soon as she gets institutions which are suited to her "spirit." Well-meaning and intelligent men like Lord Ronaldshay are led away into this line of thought by the mistaken idea of which they have got hold, that there is a fundamental difference between the spirit and outlook of the East and the West which can never be

reconciled with each other. The opposition to the introduction of Western representative institutions is not, unfortunately, confined to mistaken political philosophers or designing ex-officials. Some Indian nationalist leaders in their blind campaign against everything that comes, or is supposed to come, from the West, have decried Parliamentary institutions along with other features of Western politics and social life.

They want some system of political institutions which is essentially "Eastern," which is perfectly in agreement with the spirit of the East, though none of them have so far cared to make known as to what, according to them, constitutes an Eastern system of political institutions. Their vague expressions are particularly dangerous as they are quoted against us when we want an extension of the Parliamentary system. There can be no question about the nature of the government that we want in the future. Our future constitution must be Parliamentary in nature whether it is dubbed Western or Eastern. This is the only system that will enable the people of a large country like India to keep in touch with and influence the conduct of their Government. Those who

argue that Western institutions are not fit for India are probably influenced, at least in some cases, by the belief that Britain can maintain its dominance in India only if they are scrapped. The only alternative to Parliamentary Government in a country like India is autocracy. And if autocracy is decided upon as the best form of Government for this country, that is, in keeping with the "spirit of the East," what better authority is there to exercise it than Britain?

In a thoughtful article which Lord Ronaldshay contributed to the *Nineteenth Century and After* about four years ago, he tried to analyse the reasons for the rejection of the Reforms, at that time just entering on the second stage of their trial, by a section of Indian opinion.

"There is only one explanation," he wrote, "of this attitude which *prima facie* was wholly illogical. It was an exaggerated pride of race which was at the root of their rejection by the extreme nationalists, of that which the Englishman offered. As an Indian he refused to accept what the Englishman was prepared to give." This reason, viz. the failure of Britain to win the sympathy of India would have been quite sufficient to explain the rejection of the reforms by the advanced sec-

tion of Indian opinion But Lord Ronaldshay proceeds further and doubts "whether the democratic constitution of the West which we are striving so hard to establish on Indian soil is in harmony with the ideals of the Indian peoples "

Lord Ronaldshay is able to get a convenient quotation from a speech of the late Mr C R Das in which he gave some vague hints of his preference for a non Parliamentary non centralised system of government which would be entirely in keeping with the spirit of the country. Mr Das was characteristically vague when he defined the essentials of a national system of government In his opinion, a highly centralised Parliamentary form of Government was contrary to the economic, social and religious nature of India But beyond asserting that the organisation of village life and the practical autonomy of small local centres were more important than either provincial autonomy or central responsibility and that the ideal should be accepted once for all that "the proper function of the central authority whether in the Provincial or in the Indian Government is to advise, having a residuary power of control only in case of need and to be exercised under proper safeguards," he did not go

Mr. Das did not explain how a centralised system of government would be against the social, economic and religious traditions of India. If history explains anything, it explains in respect of India, that the country was most prosperous whenever there was a strong central government and that the moment that the central government lost its power and initiative the progress towards disintegration and decay became quick. Mr. Das's sketchy idea of a constitution in accord with the spirit of India did not satisfy Lord Ronaldshay.

He takes up another constitution the framers of which were Indians and asks if that is the type of government that nationalist India wants. This is the constitution drawn up for the Mysore State by a Committee over which Sir Brajendranath Seal, the philosopher who is at the head of the Mysore University, presided. According to the report of this Committee, the process of lawmaking is regarded as a threefold one. The first part of it consists of the submission of matters in respect of which legislation is required. Such submission should come from the people themselves and the organ to be set up for this part of the process is a Representative Assembly so constituted as to be an

epitome of the people Its members would, in the opinion of the Committee, "articulate the intuitive and unsophisticated views and wishes of the people "The second part of the process is a technical one, namely, the scientific examination of legislative proposals before they are submitted to the legislature, and the organ by which this task is to be undertaken consists of standing boards of experts so constituted as to advise both the Executive and the Legislature The final part of the process, namely the actual discussion and amendment of the draft bills, is to be performed by a body much smaller than the Representative Assembly, made up of persons of knowledge and experience, a body which would not be so much an epitome of the people as an Assembly embodying the collective wisdom and virtue The Ministers who constitute the executive are to be the agents of the ruler of the State with whom decision regarding legislation and all other matters affecting the life of the State ultimately rest

It would be absurd to describe this as in any sense an Indian constitution. The chief feature of this scheme, whatever the hemisphere to which it belongs, is clearly an attempt to retain power in the hands of the Ruler while making a show of associating the

people in the work of government. This veiled autocracy may be "Eastern" in the opinion of some people in England and of its authors. A constitution drafted on the lines on which it proceeds may also come in handy for helping England to maintain her power in India while showing to the world that Indians are not entirely ignored.

The tendency to impress on the Statutory Commission the unfitness of India for Western democracy is widespread. Lord Meston in a recent article in an English magazine (*The Contemporary Review*) says.—

"As a great Imperial power, we have always prided ourselves on shaping our institutions to the traditions and character of the peoples for whom they were designed. It may be found that we have fallen short of this ideal in India. We believed that in giving to India the beginnings of democracy we were endowing her with the best gift that we had to bestow. We may have erred in judgment. Democracy may not be capable of thriving on Indian soil or its plan may have to be substantially changed before it can take root. In face of this wider issue the virtues and defects of dyarchy are of no moment. The Commission may be impelled to search for a system that does not rest so entirely on that chain of responsibility between the lawgiver and the voter which is our conception of political justice."

If the Commission follows Lord Meston's advice and devotes its time to a search for a constitution in keeping with the spirit of India instead of trying to discover what the people

want, it will be indulging in an unjustified waste of its time and of the hard earned money of the people of India. The people of India desire nothing but a democratic representative system of Government. It may be federal or it may be unitary, but it must be representative of the people and must endow them with full responsibility in the conduct of their own affairs. It is ridiculous to assume, as Lord Ronaldshay and Lord Meston seem to have done, that democraey (which cannot be confined to geographical boundaries) has failed in India. So far as it has been introduced, it has worked as well as, or better than, it has done in Europe or America.

The troubles which have arisen under the Dyarchical constitution are not due to the introduction of the principle of democraey but because the principle of democraey introduced under it did not go far enough. India has proved its aptness for democratic representative government not only by the success of its representatives in Legislative Assembly and in the Provincial Legislative Councils but also in the innumerable Municipalities and District Boards that have been established all over the country. Some enthusiasts for ancient institutions, and some persons who are not so enthusiastic, desire like Lords Meston and Ron-

aldshay, to scrap the existing constitution and have a new one on the organisation of the village communities.

India may, in the language of political philosophers, still be the land of village communities. But to go back now to a village system would be incredible folly. It would put the clock of progress back by centuries. India has progressed far beyond the range of village politics. A political system based primarily upon the village was alright so long as the economic and social systems were also based upon the village. When in the past, the village was a political unit, it was also a social and an economic unit. But now when economic and social organisation has proceeded far beyond the bounds not of the village alone but of the district, the province, and the country, when it has crossed the barriers imposed by mountains and oceans and embraces the whole world in its scope it will be national suicide on the part of India to adopt a village constitution that might have served well sometime in the fifth century. India wants a political constitution that will be in keeping with the international position which she will occupy and which will enable her to exert to the full the influence which is hers by right of her man power and her material resources.

THE INDIAN STATES

The problem of accommodating six hundred and odd semi-independent States within the framework of a common federation is easily the thorniest that faces Indian constitution makers. To those who are ready to ignore the importance of political realities the question is easy enough. There is, for instance, a school of extreme opinion in England which would solve the problem once for all by splitting up what is now British India into a multitude of States, with a British Central Government exercising authority over them, equally with the existing States. On the other hand, there are people in India who would ignore the existence of the States altogether. They would divide British India and the States into some fifteen or twenty autonomous provinces according to linguistic and geographical affinities, all united together into a federation. The States, with their patriarchal and out of date systems of government have, they argue, no place in the scheme of things that is to be. They are afraid that the Indian States will be utilised as a lever by which Britain will keep the rest

of India in subjection. An ex-Minister (British India) who has since been transferred to more exalted spheres than the Transferred Departments of a Provincial Government writing a year or two ago said: "The States will always form a bulwark of extreme reactionary forces in India and England. They and their inefficient administrations can always be pointed out as an object lesson of India's incapacity for self government."

The only solution that this Ex-Minister has to offer is the wiping of the States off the political map of India. A good many thinking people even in democratic British India will not favour this drastic step. The majority of the States are not mushroom growths of to-day or yesterday. They have a long and interesting history behind them, sometimes reaching back to the mists of antiquity. It is not always wise to forget the past in our desire to progress. As Mr. K. M. Panikkar has pointed out in his recent book, the Indian States nurtured Indian art and culture and provided scope for Indian political and military genius when it was the general opinion that the former were worthless and Indians had no capacity for the latter. "They provided" writes Mr. Panikkar, "a school for Indian statesmanship.

While Indians were practically confined to subordinate appointments in British India, and the argument was frequently heard that they lacked both capacity and character for higher work, the Indian States alone offered fields for men of capacity. The career and achievements of statesmen and administrators like Sir T. Madhava Rao, Sir Salar Jung, Sir Dinkar Rao, Sir Seshadri Iyer and Mr Sankunni Menon, amply justify, if nothing else does, the existence of these States."

Moreover, it is not as easy as it sounds to abolish the States. Treaty rights, though ignored sometimes when it is in the interests of the suzerain power to do so, must be considered before any general change can be made. The difficulty can be overcome only if the Princes, by a generous act of self-abnegation, voluntarily surrender their rights in favour of the people of India. How little they are ready to undergo this supreme sacrifice can be seen by perusing some of the recent utterances by cultured Indian rulers. His Highness the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, one of the most progressive of Indian rulers at the present day, in his speech at the banquet which he gave to Lord Irwin on November 18 expressed great sympathy with the aspirations to self government cherished by Bri-

tish India But he was no less clear on the necessity of preserving their traditional rights to the Princes of India

"Our position" said His Highness, "in the new India that is being evolved, needs to be thoroughly safeguarded, and whatever form the future constitution will assume, our existence as political entities distinct from, and independent of, the neighbouring parts of British India will demand an adjustment which, while recognising and meeting modern conditions will not ignore history and traditions and will fully uphold our dynastic prestige, prerogatives and treaty rights" His Highness the Aga Khan, another member of the Princely order who is possessed of a statesman's vision, is no less strong in his demand that the rights and privileges of his class should not be unduly curtailed "To reduce them gradually to the mere position of great nobles and to let the power and individuality attaching to their States pass out of their control" he writes in his 'India in Transition' "would be a crime against history, art and even nationality" *The States are historical and political realities and no amount of logic can argue them away True statesmanship lies in meeting and overcoming obstacles in a spirit of compromise and not in acting as*

if they did not exist. The claims of the States must be heard and their position defined before any plan which seeks to accommodate them within the pale of an Indian Federation can be adopted.

It is, of course, plain for all to see that the advance of British India towards democratic self government cannot leave the States untouched. The authors of the Montagu Chelmsford report realised this when they made their proposals. They devoted considerable attention to this question but did not arrive at any definite conclusion. The tentative solution which they put forward was a Princes' Chamber under the Presidentship of the Viceroy which would be empowered to bring to the attention of the Government any subject that the Princes considered was of interest to the Empire or themselves in general or to any of them in particular. The Princes' Chamber has proved to be entirely ineffective partly because its powers are so indefinite but more because a number of the most important Princes refused to give it their co operation. On the rare occasions that it is called together it is nothing beyond an ornament of the Viceroyal entourage. But the formation of the Princes' Chamber is a landmark in one way. It marks the final abandonment of the policy

of isolating the Princes from one another which had been followed by the suzerian government for very long. The Princes assembled in their Chamber can now discuss subjects of common interest which would formerly have had to pass the scrutiny of their respective Residents and of the Political Department of the Government of India. But the Chamber left the problem of the position of the States vis a vis British India exactly where it was.

In his speech at Rajkot on November 22, H. E. the Viceroy announced that his Government and the Secretary of State had seen the necessity of arriving at some definite understanding regarding the future status of the States and had decided to appoint an expert Committee which would shortly assemble and take evidence in India. The Rt. [Hon'ble Srinivas Sastri in a speech in Cochin State last year advocated the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the problem of the States. "The question," said Mr. Sastri, "is no doubt a stupendous one, enough to dishearten a larger body with longer time at its disposal and with less complicated problems facing it. The problem of the States is one of the most insistent at the present moment. If it is left unsolved it will be impossible to attempt a

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authority of the Government of India has been pushed so far as to claim that subjects of the States owe a double allegiance, one directly to their rulers and the other indirectly through them to the supreme government "The Government of India" writes Mr. Pamkhar, "has exerted itself to push forward new claims and to extend old ones For this purpose, constitutional, legal and feudal theories have been brought into use. Each in its turn has served to deprive the rulers of some part of their authority or to give to the Central Government some new basis of intervention" In face of this tendency the Princes will like to put themselves in a position where the rights guaranteed to them by law are beyond the reach of the whims of the Political Department of Simla.

The States will also benefit greatly if their financial and economic relations with British India are put on a clearly understood basis. Last year, Mr. Mirza Mahomed Ismail, the Dewan of Mysore, referred to this question in his address to the Legislative Council of his State Mysore has now no customs frontier. The value of its annual trade is estimated at some crores but all customs receipts from it now go to swell the coffers of the British Indian Government.

It is only fair, said the Dewan, that Mysore should get a fair share of the customs on the goods taken by its people. In more or less degree many other States have the same complaint as Mysore. Nearer home the controversy over the Kathiawar ports is of recent date and it is necessary for all concerned to come to a decision soon.

The Committee's terms of reference as mentioned by the Viceroy mention only the treaty rights, etc., of the States. It is not clear whether the Committee will be empowered to make any recommendations regarding the question of associating the Princes more closely with the Central Government of India. It is impossible to maintain always the present air-tight arrangements between the State and British India. The Princes cannot shut their eyes to the fact that the present is the age of wireless and the airship and that they can no longer maintain their old isolation. Their States and the neighbouring provinces of British India are constantly acting and reacting on each other. It must be said that many of the Princes have shed their narrow views and look at problems from the broader outlook of a united India. The experience which many of the Princes have gained as India's representatives at the sessions of the

Imperial Conference since 1917, at the meetings of the League of Nations and at the various international gatherings at Geneva and elsewhere, would have been of great help in making them understand the interests of the nation as apart from those of their individual and often insignificant States. Many methods have been suggested to achieve this difficult end.

H. H. the Aga Khan suggests the establishment of something like a large Senate in which all the States will be represented. "After the due establishment of the Federal Constitution," he writes, "the room for Imperial legislation as distinct from questions of policy will be so restricted that my preference is for a Senate or Council, representing the Provinces and the Native States, instead of endlessly complicating the Federal organisation by the creation of two central chambers with little to legislate about. To this body, each great province will send eight to ten representatives, some chosen by the Governor and approved by either the one or the other house and the remainder—selected by each of the Assemblies and approved by the Governor. Hyderabad as the premier State would send seven representatives and States like Mysore five representatives. Even the smallest states like Janjira or Morvi would send at least one."

A super senate like that suggested by H. H. the Aga Khan would have the merit of not ignoring any of the States. But this is practically the only merit which it is likely to have. It will be too huge a body for deliberation and, if a majority of its members came to attend, even for the routine processes of legislation. More reasonable is the suggestion made in the Montagu-Chelmsford report that an Indian Privy Council should be instituted, the members of which will be Rulers of Indian States, as well as their subjects and prominent men from British India. This body will not, of course, be representative of all the States but it will give ample scope for the talents of a few of the most gifted among them. Abilities which are now wasted on the administration of diminutive States with inadequate resources will then be made available to the country as a whole. The Princes also cannot resent the advice offered by a body, which though not entirely Princely in its composition, has among its members some of their own representatives. It will give an opportunity to the subjects of Indian States, who have in the vast majority of cases absolutely no political rights at present, a means to associate themselves however indirectly, with the Government of their own States as well as of British India. A Privy

Council like this may not be in fact it cannot be, the means of the permanent reconciliation of the rights and claims of Indian States and British India. A true Federation like that which India is destined to be will want a stronger bond of union between its component parts than that offered by a Privy Council. It must have a central Legislature which is truly representative of the States as a whole, that is to say, representative of the people as well as the rulers. But a federation of this nature may not materialise in the next few years and in that period of transition a common Privy Council will be an excellent school in which Indian States and British India can learn to work together. It is to be hoped that the Committee announced by the Viceroy will not confine itself purely to the relations of the States with British India. It would have realised its purpose completely only if it secures some sort of undertaking from the Princes that they will associate their subjects in the work of Government at least to some extent. In some progressive States like Mysore, Travancore, Cochin and Baroda there are even now active and representative legislatures with a good deal of power. The people of these States have, and make excellent use of, the means of criticism-

ing their governments which have been officiated Public opinion is making itself felt in the Government of these States. The rulers of these, it is to be hoped, will keep themselves abreast of the times by introducing the constitutional procedure of British India, just as they have introduced its judicial procedure

But, whatever the recommendations that the Indian States Committee and the Statutory Commission on the Constitution make, they will be acceptable to thinking people only if they maintain unimpaired the authority of the Central Government over the States as well as the Provinces Indian history shows that the country has been most prosperous when the central government has been strongest The centrifugal forces at work are so strong that the moment the hand of the Central Government over subordinate administrations grows weak, fissiparous tendencies manifest themselves "I believe", said the Rt Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri in his lecture quoted before, "that upon the whole the proper functioning of our Indian States is only possible, the welfare of the subjects of the States can be only guaranteed if the British Crown and its representatives are always free to interfere and to interpose in the name of good administration".

BRITAIN, INDIA AND THE FUTURE

Indian observers have, of late, found a general "hardening of heart," as Sir T B Saprú phrased it, in England against India. The promises made immediately after the war, when the services rendered by India in that great crisis were still fresh in men's minds, are more or less forgotten. The tendency to look upon this country as an uncivilized part of the world for whose government the white race must for ever remain responsible, as its people are inherently incapable of governing themselves, seems to be again gaining the upper hand. The consequences are noticeable not only in the attempts to entrench British dominance in India for ever but also in British colonial policy.

Particularly in Africa is the change of heart on the part of Britain most obvious. In South Africa Indians had for long been treated as race of helots but Britain could in this case plead, though she could not convince, that she was not directly responsible for the policy pursued. But East Africa is directly under the British Colonial Office and Parlia-

ment is directly responsible for every act of the governments functioning in it. In Kenya, Indian interests have been practically ignored. A White Paper was issued in 1923 regarding the government of the colony which went against Indian interests by reserving the Highlands exclusively for European colonisation. But in regard to other matters the White Paper recognised Indian claims to some extent. In the years that succeeded, the British Government gave more and more attention to the interests of the white planters of Kenya to the grave detriment of Indian interests. The Europeans in Kenya and elsewhere in East Africa are not like the settlers in Australia or Canada workers themselves. They have gone to the colony as capitalists to exploit its natural resources and the labour of the natives. In 1923 the Indians of Kenya were assured by a representative of His Majesty's Government in Parliament that self government for Kenya that is to say, government by a majority of White settlers in the Colonial Legislature, would not be granted within any measurable distance of time. Yet recent events indicate that the White settlers may, after all, succeed in gaining their object in the immediate future. It was definitely promised by the White Paper of 1923 that there would be no racial discrimi-

mination outside the Highlands. But since then Indians have been discriminated against in the sale of land in some of the chief cities of the colony. The Feetham Commission's report, which reduced the Indian element and lessened its importance in local administration, has been accepted wholesale against the unanimous protest of the Indians in the colony.

Conditions are no better on the other side of the world, in another colony which owes its prosperity mainly to Indians, British Guiana. Here there had been no discrimination against Indians in the past. There had been equal franchise laws between the races. But a recent Parliamentary Commission which included Labour representatives has recommended, and the recommendation has been accepted by Parliament, that the constitution of the Combined Court, the legislature of the colony, should be altered so as to bring it more into line with the legislatures of other colonies. Indians are likely to suffer on account of this change. The other recommendations of the Commission are of a nature to put more power in the hands of capitalist planters to the prejudice of the Indians and other labouring classes. The situation is so serious that some Indian leaders have threa-

tened that the Indian population would leave the colony for other lands where they were more welcome if nothing was done to safeguard their interests

To come to matters nearer home, what greater, or more powerful proof of Britain's change of heart towards India is wanted than in the treatment of the unanimous report of the Indian Sandhurst Committee? The Secretary of State and the Government of India are insisting on the importance and the convenience of having unanimous reports from Committees and Commissions appointed to investigate important questions. Here was a Committee on which British generals and civilian experts on army matters were sitting as colleagues with Indian nationalist leaders. It issued a unanimous report. But its Chief recommendations have been ignored by His Majesty's Government and its subordinate department in India. The main recommendations of the Sandhurst Committee were that the scheme of segregating Indian officers in eight selected units should be abandoned, that a military college on the model of Sandhurst should be established in India and that Indians should be admitted to all arms in the army. The last recommendation has been given effect to partially by the admission of a small number of Indians eve-

1937 year to Woolwich and Cranwell. But the first two have been rejected. Every Indian and British Officer who gave evidence before the Committee spoke against the Eight Units scheme. Its retention can only be ascribed to the racial bias of the authorities, whatever may be the reasons given superficially. The rejection of the proposal for an Indian military college is a definite refusal on the part of Britain to co-operate with India in the task of transforming the mercenary force that now guards its frontiers into a really national army. Britain obviously does not want India to supply its own requirements of trained military officers.

Some in India think that if Labour comes into power at the next, or at some future general election, the state of things will undergo a radical transformation. They believe that British Labour is out to establish democracy and self-government throughout the Empire. Some members of the Labour party are only too willing to encourage this hope. They may be, probably most of them are really, sincere in their desire and professions to help India on her way to self-government. India's moral support would not be a thing which the Labour party could afford to despise. But is Labour likely to give Swaraj to India if and when it comes

into power? It is a matter of serious doubt

Confronted with the problem of controlling a great Empire, the untrained leaders of British Labour are likely to follow closely in the footsteps of their predecessors of the Conservative and Liberal parties. They have, in fact, already done so. In spite of all protestations it was a Labour Secretary of State who sanctioned the Bengal Ordinance.

It must not be forgotten that Labour represents an element of British society which has taken absolutely no part in directing the policy which has built up the Empire in India. And the British Empire in India has grown up almost alone on the strength of the policy that was pursued. It is purely the achievement of the richer class of merchants and the aristocratic classes who controlled the army and navy. In this case India is absolutely different from the Dominions. Australia is the achievement of the working classes who settled down and developed the country's agricultural resources. Similarly, once the way was opened by military conquest, Canada also was built up by settlers from the British working classes. India, on the other hand, was won and held by the aristocracy and the middle classes. The policy that these classes, and the representatives whom they sent

out to govern this country followed, was primarily selfish. It was aimed at maintaining India as a supplier of raw materials for British industries, as a market for British goods and as a career for the young men turned out by British Public Schools and Universities. To put it in plain words, it was aimed at bleeding India for the benefit of Britain. But now and then, particularly during the days of Liberal power or when Liberal ideals of political justice were too strong to be resisted by the Tories, British policy in India was really aimed at promoting the welfare of this country and preparing it ultimately to take control of its own political destinies.

If Labour is ever firmly established in power in England, the state of things may be altogether different. An aristocracy may, after all, be generous once its objects are attained. A plutocracy is only intent on satisfying its love of money. But Labour is of all classes the most selfish, the most narrow minded, the most easily excited to unwise courses by appeals to its self-interest. The fate of India under a Labour Government, firmly in power for a number of years, is entirely incalculable. If the workers of Lancashire are without employment now, Labour blames the capitalist classes and

the government that is run by them. But if Labour itself is running the government, and still the workers of Lancashire are without work, is it unlikely that the ultimate cause of unemployment may be traced to the mills of Bombay and Ahmedabad and that the most drastic and the most effective means will be sought for putting these out of action?

Labour representatives in Parliament are even now urging various methods in order that Indian labour may not compete harmfully with British Labour. They can only agitate and represent now. But if they are in a majority in Parliament will they not give more effective expression to their ideas?

The danger is not slight. But the day of complete Labour rule in England is still in the future. What is meant to be impressed here is only that it is unwise to expect too much from Labour. It may after all turn out to be but a change from the chastisement of the lash to the chastisement of the scorpion.

THE NEXT STEP.

What is to be the next step? Many proposals have been made for political reforms. Many constitutions have been drafted. It is not intended here to go into constitutional details but to state some broad facts which Parliament and the people of England can afford to ignore only at very grave risk.

One thing is clear. Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford were wrong when they hit upon the expedient of decennial inquests to find out whether, and how far, India had justified the instalment of democracy supplied. The ordeal is too much to be faced every ten years. The prospect of a general pulling down and reconstruction of established things lets loose all the disruptive elements in a heterogeneous society like that of India. Each community and sub-community, each section and sub-section, is intent on establishing what it considers to be its own rights. Exaggerated claims are made in order that at least something may be granted.

Divisions are not unoften intentionally created by official inspiration in order to back up spurious claims. It is the most effective

method by which India can be prevented from becoming a nation. Every effort seems to have been made during the preliminary tour of the Simon Commission to set up one community against the other. Disaffected leaders of small minorities, more intent on pushing themselves into the limelight than on anything else, were encouraged and invited to appear before the commissioners. It is not known what reply Sir John Simon gave to each and every one of these seekers after the loaves and fishes of office. His reputation for statesmanship entitles us to believe that he did not encourage their hopes for special privileges all round. We may feel confident that Sir John Simon will not be led astray. But the same confidence cannot be reposed in some of his colleagues. They are only too ready to confess, what has been studiously impressed upon them, that India is a land of differences too deep to be bridged. The Commissioners have discovered not merely communal differences in this unfortunate country. Some of them have looked further and seen a yawning gulf between the rural and urban classes. The tendency shown by the commissioners to see differences everywhere is really alarming to those who have the interests of the country at heart. But there is no immediate danger. This time British statesmen have been foolish enough to unite almost all classes

and all communities in common opposition to the Commission they have sent. Only a few odd remnants here and there are co-operating. But successive inquiries may act as a great inducement to the various communities not to coalesce into a common nation.

The Statutory Commission that is working now may not recommend the grant of immediate and complete Swaraj. But it should in any case recommend the establishment of a constitution which draws its motive power from within, which has within it the capacity for progressive modification in relation to changing conditions that is lacking now. Whatever the form of the Legislature that will be established as a result of the Commission's recommendations, it should have the power, with sufficient safeguards, to change its own constitution if it thinks it necessary to do so. Of course, a measure of control may still be retained by Parliament.

Another matter, decision on which cannot be postponed, is the relation of the Indian States with the rest of India. The Butler Committee is now busy with this question. It is to be hoped that it will recommend some practicable solution. But it is not enough alone to put the foreign relations of the States on

an understandable basis. The Princes must realise once for all that the world is moving forward and that it is high time for them to introduce into the government of their States at least the beginnings of democracy. Democracy in British India will never be safe if undiluted autocracy prevails in the Indian States. The Butler Committee is not, of course, empowered to recommend alterations in the internal government of the states. It is concerned only with their foreign relations. But the Princes may take the hint from what is happening in British India and introduce really effective reforms in their Governments.

Four years ago Dr. R. P. Paranjpye in his presidential address at the National Liberal Federation outlined the minimum demands that a united India should make before a Statutory Royal Commission. These were:—

The army should be gradually placed on an Indian footing and recruitment so accelerated that at the end of thirty years no new European officers may be required, the strength of the British army in India being determined by the Indian Legislature.

The civil services to be put on an Indian footing, no new European recruit being taken after five years.

Complete financial autonomy should be granted to India as to the Dominions

The foreign relations of India should continue on an Imperial basis, India being represented on a body that may be constituted from the Dominions

Many developments, particularly in the Imperial and international sphere, have taken place since these suggestions were made. They may now be considered much too moderate. But they may at least be taken as something to go upon.

The position of India *vis-a-vis* the Empire requires to be cleared up. The last Imperial Conference clearly defined the position of the self governing parts of the Empire. The report of the Committee on Inter Imperial Relations, which was subsequently adopted by the full conference, stated —

“They (the self governing dominions) are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another, in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.”

The Dominions are now absolutely independent for all practical purposes. They have secured the right of appointing their own diplomatic representatives in foreign countries. Canada, which has always taken the lead in matters of Imperial policy, has already got its own Minister at Washington and has decided to have one in Tokio also. South African statesmen have declared that their Dominion would claim the right of standing neutral in case of war.

India occupies a very equivocal position in matters Imperial. She shares many privileges with the Dominions. She is, for one thing, associated with them in the Imperial Conference. She is, like them, an original member of the League of Nations. But for all that, her position is ambiguous. The Committee on Inter Imperial Relations, which altered the scope of the Acts controlling the relations of the various Dominions to Britain, refused to interfere with the case of India. It merely referred in passing to a resolution of the Imperial War Conference of 1917 by which "due recognition was given to the important position held by India in the British Commonwealth".

What is to be the future of India in regard to the Empire? She forms a factor

altogether different from the rest of the Empire. She is not of the Dominions, nor yet of the Crown Colonies. It might seem at first sight that it is useless for representatives of this country to take part in future sessions of the Imperial Conference. India occupies a more or less honorary position at it. Her representation is only nominally representative. Her problems are of only secondary importance to it. No question is decided with reference to her wishes. Why then take any part? The question is natural. But it would be wiser for us to take the part that we can play now until we can do better. The Empire is not static. It is continually moving and progressing. The relations between its various members are being continually readjusted on new bases, with reference to the new and changing conditions of the world. We have Dominion Self Government before us as our political goal. It would, therefore, be a mistake to cut ourselves off from the contact with progress in the Dominions by non-co-operating with the Imperial Conference.

On the other side, Great Britain and the self-governing Dominions or at least the thinking section of their people realise fully the very great importance of India as a mem-

ber of the Imperial Commonwealth. It is interesting to recall in this connection what Mr. J. L. Garvin wrote during the last sessions of the Imperial Conference.

"Relatively" he wrote, "Asia will not become less and less important in the twentieth century but more and more, and that movement will be of incalculable importance, directly or indirectly, for every one of the English speaking peoples whether in the Empire or under the stars and stripes. India contains by herself one sixth of the entire number of mankind. India is on the road to full Dominionhood. Gradual British guidance of that process is the sole alternative in our time to a stupendous anarchy, with red ruin and breaking up' beside which the present Chinese chaos would seem mild."

'How does it concern other Dominions? In this wise—that if, in place of the British Raj, India were pulled together again, under a hostile system, the national survival of Australia and New Zealand would be altogether improbable, full tides of Asiatic immigration, submerging for ever the handful of Whites who now dominate Africa would be quite possible, and the Pacific Ocean would become a more insure problem than it seems to Canada to day. It is not by their own strength that Australia and South Africa at least restrain the immense human forces of Asia. Though social self-protection is necessary, respect for the Dominion of India is required."

India is important to the Empire as much as the Empire is important to India. The statesmen who now control British policy seem unable to look as far forward as Mr. Garvin. Many of their recent actions show that instead of helping India to the goal of Dominionhood as fast as possible, they are

intent on putting as many obstacles as possible in the way of her progress India is willing to co-operate on equal terms. If the statesmen of the Empire are not wise enough to admit her to these at the earliest opportunity, her disaffection, natural under the circumstances, will be the greatest danger that the Empire will have to face in the coming years.





SOCIAL REFORM AS A POLICY.

There will be little meaning in the Statutory Commission investigating the progress of social reform, sanitation and education in India at the present stage. Indians got what power they have in these matters only seven years ago. Before that everything was in the hands of the bureaucracy. Even to a race of supermen this period is too short in which to bring about a revolution. But the Indian Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Legislatures have done what they could for education, sanitation and social reform, hampered as they were by the want of money. The raising of the age of consent and the age of marriage has received a great deal of attention. Compulsory primary education acts have been passed in many places. Want of money alone prevents many more areas from making primary education compulsory. Perhaps the most striking innovation in socio-political matters has been the entry of enlightened women representatives in to municipal and legislative bodies. Many municipalities do not now consider themselves complete if they do not have a woman representative.

These pioneer women who have ventured into regions which had been closed to them even a very few years ago, have acquitted themselves as well as, or better than, their sisters who have gained admission in recent years into representative assembly in the West. One of the Indian Provincial legislatures, namely, Madras, has the unique honour of having a lady as its Deputy President.

The Commission will attach more importance to the question of social reform than it would perhaps, otherwise have done, because of the publication of Miss Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*. Miss Mayo has sought to give India a reputation in the eyes of the world as an international sink of immorality and corruption. According to her, the Hindu race is socially in a stagnant and evil smelling morass into which it is steadily sinking deeper and deeper. She has written her book with the definite object of proving that India is an international danger. In these days when the world is so closely knit together, when New York and London have been reduced to a few days' journey from Bombay and Calcutta, matters relating to the health and sanitation of the latter cities are of prime interest and importance to the inhabitants of the former. A serious epidemic of any na-

turo starting from the slums of one city may, if not combated immediately, decimate the others within a very few weeks. Though she may not have actually said so in so many words Miss Mayo implies clearly that the lack of social progress in India constituted a clear case for the continued white control of the country.

The connection between social stagnation and Indian self-government is quite different from what Miss Mayo supposes it to be. If anything, British rule is the chief cause of Indian social stagnation. Coming as entire strangers to the religion, culture and social organisation of India, our British rulers adopted the wise plan of remaining entirely neutral in these matters. But neutrality was interpreted as an obligation on the part of government to maintain existing usages at all costs, irrespective of whether those usages conformed to modern ideas of social justice. The state of things was better in the early days of British rule. Then enlightened statesmen like Lord William Bentinck were at the helm of affairs and they were not behindhand in bringing up the advanced section of Indian opinion led by men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy in carrying out revolutionary reforms like the abolition of sati. Things are otherwise now.

and more than once in the past reactionaries among Hindus could look with confidence to the support of Government in their stand against the reforms which were sought to be introduced by the advanced section. Even the Depressed Classes, of whose existence so much is being made now, were practically ignored until a few years ago when their political importance as a lever against the claims of more advanced communities was recognised.

That political liberty will have a very important and probably unanticipated effect in bringing about social emancipation is proved by the non Brahmin movement in the Madras Presidency. The slight measure of responsibility granted under the Montagu Chelmsford constitution had the effect of enabling the non Brahmins realise their political importance. Side by side they saw their own social weaknesses. The result was that the exercise of political power and the social reform went on simultaneously in a harmonious way. The process will be far more quick and far more comprehensive if political liberty is complete.

Mr K. Natunjan than whom there is no more sincere social reformer in India, explained the course of British policy in regard to

Indian social reform in the course of his excellent presidential address at the Indian National Social Conference held at Madras in December 1927. Natarajan said —

The late Mr. Montagu was perhaps the first British statesman to realise that the Indian system of administration operated as a barrier to social progress and he expressly indicated in the Montagu Chelmsford Report that one great object in expanding the constitution was to afford greater opportunity for social reform. Whatever might be the defects of the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms, in whatever other respects they may have failed to come up to expectations, they have certainly given a great stimulus to social activity and social legislation and it is no exaggeration to say that during the last six or seven years we have had more attempt at social legislation than during the previous thirty or forty years. It is the experience not only of India but of other lands that political expansion is followed by social progress. The extension of the franchise in Great Britain and the establishment of effective national Governments in Japan, Turkey, and even in Afghanistan, have had this result. I am convinced and I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my conviction in the strongest manner possible, that we have reached a stage in which further and much needed so large further extension of the rights of self Government to the people of India

A non-Indian observer, Mr C F Andrews, has after a close study of Indian problems ranging over a quarter of a century, arrived at the very same conclusion

“It has been,” he wrote some time ago in *Foreign Affairs*, “my daily experience for nearly a quarter of a century to watch the

course of events in India with an eager loving for advance in humanitarian directions. Every day my own conviction—slowly and painfully formed—has grown stronger that the rule of the foreigner is now definitely standing in the way of healthy social reform.”

“It may be asked in criticism of what I have written whether the depressed classes themselves would stand to gain or to lose under Swaraj. This is a crucial question. Unhesitatingly I would say that to day the strongest force working for the emancipation are to be found outside government circles.”

If Britain is really as anxious for social reform as she pretends to be, the best that she can do for it is to entrust the people of India with full responsibility for their own future.

LINES OF REFORM

A conference of almost all the political parties in the country and a number of communal organisations met in Delhi towards the end of February 1928, to try to formulate a scheme of political reforms which would secure universal acceptance in India. The conference did not carry its task of constitution making to its completion. But a committee which it pointed to consider the question gave some hints as to the lines on which the work might proceed. The committee was instructed to report to the conference on the following subjects

- 1 The constitution of the Swaraj Parliament, whether it should be bi cameral or uni cameral
- 2 Franchise
- 3 A declaration of rights
- 4 Rights of Labour and Peasantry
- 5 Indian States

A summary of the Committee's report which was issued shortly after it finished its

sittings, said that a comprehensive declaration of rights had been framed by it. A considerable discussion took place, according to the summary referred to, on the question as to whether the constitution should be a unitary or a federal one. But the Committee came to the conclusion that a formal theoretical decision on this question was unnecessary and what really mattered was the division of powers and subjects between the Central and Provincial Governments. It was on the basis of this division that consideration took place as to whether the Legislature should be uni-cameral or bi-cameral. The majority opinion favoured a bi-cameral Central Legislature and uni-cameral Provincial Legislatures. Some members were for an unicameral legislature throughout, whilst others wanted two houses even in provinces, specially in case adult suffrage was agreed upon.

Franchise

In regard to franchise a considerable majority were of opinion that there should be adult suffrage both in the provinces and in the lower house of the Central Legislature. In the upper house a majority have recommended a restricted franchise. Some were of opinion, however, that the upper house

should be elected solely by the constituent Provincial Legislatures

Qualifications for Candidates

Regarding the qualifications for candidates the Committee has recommended an age limit of 25 for the lower house and an age limit of 30 for the upper house

Number of Members

As for the number of members for the Legislatures, the Committee has suggested 750 with power to increase if necessary, for the lower house of the Central Legislature and 250 for the upper house. For the Provinces it is suggested that there should be, as a general rule, one member for every 1,00,000 of the population, with this proviso that a province with a population of less than 10 millions may have a maximum of 100 members

Distribution of Powers

The Committee has drawn up lists of subjects wherein the Central and provincial governments should have exclusive control and also some in which they will have concurrent powers. The Central Government alone should have all the residuary powers. The Committee has also made a provision for the settlement of disputes between the Central

Language.

The Committee has also recommended that the language of the Commonwealth should be Hindustani, written either in the Devanagari or the Urdu script. This does not mean that other languages, including English will not be permitted. In the provinces the local languages will naturally take pride of place but Hindustani and, if necessary, English, may be used.

The full report of the Committee has not yet been made available. From the summary that is published, it appears that the deliberations of the Conference were not as comprehensive as they might have been. The summary does not give any indication of the attitude of the Conference on many important subjects. But the recommendations so far as they go, are sound, except in the matter of the franchise. This country is certainly not yet advanced enough for complete adult franchise. A qualified franchise, perhaps as it exists now, perhaps slightly broader, will be all that is necessary for a good many years to come.

The redistribution of provinces on a linguistic or other basis is another question that is likely to be raised in the future and which

is likely to engender much heat. In the discussion of this question it is necessary to remember that it is first of all necessary to eliminate factors that might let loose forces of disintegration. A merely geographical distribution of the Provinces would be preferable to one based on linguistic, racial or religious affinities as it would emphasise the unity of the country as a whole and keep forces of disintegration in check.

Communal electorates constitute a third important question. If they are allowed to expand and develop on the present lines, the Indian nation will never materialise. Communal electorates should be abolished at the earliest opportunity.

